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THE

CROWN WARD.

BY ARCHIBALD BOYD,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DUCHESS," "THE CARDINAL,"

&c., &c.

Nurse. His name is Romeo, and a Montague,
The only son of your great enemy.
Juliet. My only love sprang from my only hate!
ROMEO AND JULIET.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CONTENTS

TO

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

Page

The Deutches Fraulein . . . . . 1—8

CHAPTER II.

The Pirate and the Smuggler . . . . . 9—25

CHAPTER III.

Octavio Baldi . . . . . 26—39

CHAPTER IV.

A Mysterious Traveller . . . . . 40—60

CHAPTER V.

The Moss-Trooper . . . . . 61—72

CHAPTER VI.

Page

The Secret Chamber . . . . . 73—80

CHAPTER VII.

Two Officials of Queen Bess . . . . 81—104

CHAPTER VIII.

How Listeners hear no good of themselves . 105—125

CHAPTER IX.

Tit for Tat . . . . . 126—140

CHAPTER X.

The Barb and the Brown Colt . . . . 141—152

CHAPTER XI.

The Hot Trod . . . . . 153—165

CHAPTER XII.

The Pass . . . . . 166—183

CHAPTER XIII.

Mary Ker . . . . . 184—200

CHAPTER XIV.

Euphame Cranstoun . . . . . 201—222

CHAPTER XV.

Page

The Bower . . . . . 223—239

CHAPTER XVI.

Minch Moor . . . . . 240—254

CHAPTER XVII.

The English Ambassador . . . . . 255—282

CHAPTER XVIII.

James VI. . . . . 283—309

THE CROWN WARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEUTSCHES FRAULEIN.

It was the 12th of October, 1599.

The glorious reign of Elizabeth was drawing rapidly to a close; and yet, strange to say, the approaching event seemed to suggest to her subjects, reasons rather for congratulation than regret. To the mass of the people, ever preferring the future to the present, the very novelty of a change in their rulers possessed a charm; while, with the higher classes, the advent of a new monarch, by appealing to their vanity or their interest, created feelings of the most intense and agreeable excitement.

Queen Bess was penurious by nature. Except in the case of some half-dozen favourites, her generosity in money matters had been rarely exhibited. Of patents of nobility and personal distinctions, she was still more niggardly. It was natural, therefore, that her spendthrift courtiers—those waiters upon Providence, ever a numerous tribe in the vicinity of a palace — should look eagerly forward to the advent of a more generous master; while a wealthy and untitled gentry welcomed, with not less complacency, the accession of a sovereign, more disposed than the heiress of the Tudors, to bestow the long-desired and long-denied dignities.

Who that successor was to be, was as yet unknown. The Queen, if she had formed any decision on the subject, preserved a rigorous silence with regard to the intended legatee of her throne; while public opinion, as interest or passing events suggested, conferred the sceptre of England on the King of Scots, or his cousin, the Lady Arabella Stuart, and not unfrequently on the young Earl of Essex. The last, the

successor of Leicester in the favour of Elizabeth, was her personal relative, and possessed a further claim to the crown by his tracing his descent from the royal house through Edmond of Woodstock, a younger brother of Edward III.

It was while such matters were agitating the public mind, and early in the morning of the day above-mentioned, that we have to conduct the reader to a small cove on the coast of the county of Durham, at no great distance from the site now occupied by the town of Hartlepool. To the north, the land stretched seaward in a bold rocky promontory; while further south, the cliffs gradually lost elevation, till they subsided into the low downs, which, then, as now, formed the north bank of the Tees. The cove itself, about equi-distant from the headland, and the mouth of the river, was approached by an entrance so tortuous, that it would have escaped the notice of a casual observer. Within, however, the water was entirely land-locked, and the repose of its surface formed a strange contrast to the large, white-crested billows, which, on the

morning in question broke in masses of foam upon the iron-bound shore.

The little haven was but a quarter of a mile across; and on the land-side, was skirted by bare and bleak downs, which separated it from the cultivated districts further inland. From the edge of these, the ground sank rapidly to the salt water; but the sides of the steep declivity, better sheltered from the blast, than the open moor above, were thickly clothed with natural timber, whose fantastic branches almost dipped themselves in the brine.

Beneath their shade, and close to the beach, stood a long, low building, the solitary evidence of man's handiwork. It was constructed of rough beams, crossing each other diamond-fashion, having the interstices filled up with lath and plaster, while its steep and gabled roof bore the same character of rude architecture, and was thatched with heath.

The interior, however, seemed to argue no absence of wealth; for, though the single sitting-room, and two or three adjoining bed-chambers, were to the last degree coarse in their furniture

and appliances, a large store or warehouse which occupied one-half of the building, and opened from the sitting apartment, was filled with boxes, sea-chests, bales of goods, and packages.

Some of these were open, and displayed to view woollen fabrics from the looms of Flanders, velvets from Genoa, and silks from the Levant. In one corner were several suits of coat-armour; in another a goodly assemblage of boarding-pikes; while sundry arquebuses, lances, and broad swords, apparently not unused, added to the heterogeneous character of the collection, and suggested a doubt as to whether the proprietor of the tenement did not combine with his character of merchant, that of free-trader and pirate; professions which, in the days of Queen Bess, were not understood to argue any want of personal respectability.

The master of the forest-lodge himself, was in dress and appearance, in entire correspondence with the interior of his mansion. He was a short thick-set man, with a weather-beaten, but not disagreeable countenance, and

wore a costume combining in itself the habiliments of sailor and landsman. The ruff, and the cloak of brown cloth, were common to all classes, and gave him no distinctive character; but the loose frock, the large Flemish breeches, and the close-fitting felt cap, marked his familiarity with sea life; while long and large boots, garnished at the bottom by a pair of enormous spurs, seemed to intimate that his connexion with the salt water did not prevent his occasionally extending his traffic into the land.

At the moment we introduce him to our readers, he was pacing with rapid steps the summit of a bluff, or low promontory, which separated the cove from the ocean, and which, from its elevation, gave him a better sea-view than could be obtained from the haven below. He appeared in no amiable mood.

"Ride for the bishop?" said he aloud, in a tone of intense irritation; "ride for the devil, say I! What man in his senses would be a vassal of the Church? Here, it has been blowing thunder and lightning for three days together, when, doubtless, half-a-dozen galleys

have been stranded within five leagues; and now that I could have had the chance of picking up a fortune from the wrecks, comes an order from my Lord's secretary, to get me ready to carry some despatches to the Scotch border. And yet go I must. I have more things in my store than will bear inquiring into; and it would not suit me to ruffle the feathers of Master Wyvil. He might do me a villainous ill turn else. But what comes here?" exclaimed he, as a little galley showed herself from behind a point of land to the northward. A black hull, with a yellow streak, and the ensign of the Hanse Towns at the peak. "It must be the Deutsches Fräulein. It must be Andrew Barton. Little loves the Scotch rover English ground: and sore strait it needs be that drives him in hither."

The cause of the smuggler's exclamation had now become more distinctly visible. It was a vessel of forty or fifty tons burden, and built according to the fashion of the time, with a very lofty prow and stern; but open at mid-ships, as if to enable the crew to use occa-

sionally sweeps, or long oars. The vessel had evidently suffered much from the tempest. One of her masts was gone, and the other had barely enough remaining to support a small square-sail, under the influence of which the bark made its way rapidly towards the port of refuge. As it neared the bluff, round the base of which swept the sea-way, the figures of its crew became by degrees visible, till at length it was possible to distinguish their individual appearance. To them, too, in his turn, the solitary out-looker had apparently become the subject of remark; for one of the mariners climbed to the summit of the forecastle, and waved his bonnet, in eager recognition. The salute was instantly returned, and the smuggler hurried down the bank to the shore of the little haven, into which, under the influence of the favouring wind, the galley was making its way rapidly.

CHAPTER II.

THE PIRATE AND THE SMUGGLER.

In the meantime, the little vessel had entered the cove, and let go her anchor opposite the smuggler's hut. Immediately after, a small boat was raised from the interior and dropped over the side. Into this descended a solitary mariner, and under the influence of his powerful arms, the little shallop rapidly reached the shore. The new comer sprung lightly on the beach, where he was met with eager welcome by the master of the Forest Lodge.

"What, Andrew Barton!" said the latter. "You here? I thought your grandfather's fate might have taught you a lesson. The laws

against piracy now-a-days are as sharp as in those of King Harry."

"Tut, tut, man," said the new arrival, "the statute has grown mouldy. Besides, I struck a good blow at Cadiz, and my Lord of Nottingham knows it."

"You judge then, that the new score will wipe off the old one?"

"Not a doubt of it, Diccon; the more by token, that if the Lord Charles laid a heavy hand upon every gallant that played the free-trader at times, on his own account, he might bring in Sir Walter, as well as smaller fry like some folks you wot of."

"Nay, then," said his companion, laughing, "if you make out Raleigh to be like ourselves, 'a brother of the coast,' there is none dare say word against so honourable a fraternity. But, come lad, come, what brings you here?"

"You need hardly ask that," said the mariner, with a grin, and an expressive motion of his fingers. "Broken masts and shattered cross-trees."

"Ay, true enough, but whither were you

bound, if wind and weather had served better? Are your falcons in hold, or on deck, lad?" Is the Deutsches Fräulein the gallant rover, or a base, mechanical craft, stored with his Majesty of Denmark's best beer?"

"Your arrow is in the clout, at last, Diccon; for in good sooth, I have some of his Grace's brewing on board, and yet that's not the main matter in hand," and the speaker stopped suddenly, and looked at his companion with an expression of doubt, as if unwilling to continue the communication.

The smuggler observed the hesitation, and interpreted it correctly.

"Come, Andrew," said he, "open your budget—out with this story of yours. But first, let's to the lodge, for the morning air is rather too sharp for out-door converse. I have, within, a Bigorre sausage, and a stoup of Bordeaux, that will loosen your tongue, were it as rusty as my grand-dame's, and she has not said word since Pentecost."

The smuggler turned as he spoke, and made towards his dwelling, followed by the seaman.

On gaining the sitting room, he threw a fresh log on the fire, took from a crib or concealed closet in the wall, some of the eatables with which it appeared lavishly furnished, and having filled a tankard with Bordeaux wine from a cask which stood in his inner store, he drew a stool to the table, and motioned to his guest to follow his example.

The seaman did so, and for some minutes nothing was heard but the emulous clatter of knives and forks, as both proceeded eagerly with their morning meal.

When the repast was over, the smuggler, whose curiosity seemed awakened, returned to the attack, and once more inquired as to the real cause of Barton's voyage.

Again the seaman hesitated. At length, however, he appeared to have adopted a resolution.

"Well, Dick Fenwick," said he, with a good-natured laugh, "I suppose I must make a clean breast of it, and the more so, as I see not well, how I can sail my course without your aid. You know Peter Munch?"

"The High Admiral of Denmark—he who carried the Queen of Scots over from Copenhagen on her marriage?"

"The very man. Well you may recollect, because it was rumoured that I was better acquainted than any schipper in Altona with the Scotch coast; and it was a matter of high urgency that Queen Anne should arrive safe; they sent for me, and Peter Munch made me pilot on board his ship; and so, as he found I knew my trade indifferently well, he and I grew intimate."

"You intimate with Peter Munch!" cried Fenwick, in tones of astonishment. "By the Lord, Harry, man! that north country conceit of yours has turned your brain. Why, Peter is the proudest man in Christendom."

"Call him by what name you will, Diccon, Peter and I became good friends. But, to make a long story short, last week the High Admiral comes to Altona, and learning that I was in the port, has me summoned to the house of the Burgomaster, where he and the other High Mightinesses take up their quarters.

"'Andrew,' said he, as soon as he had first carefully shut the door of his secret chamber, where we were alone. 'Andrew, is the galley ready for sea?'

"What! the old fellow knew the Deutsches Fräulein?"

"Well."

"'My Lord,' says I, 'I am lading with beer for the Frith of Forth, and the hold is not half full. I shall be ready in a week.'

"'A week!' says he. 'You must sail with the afternoon's tide. With half cargo, you will make the better speed—and this is a matter of urgency. There is a servant of a friend of mine needs go to Leith, and I have promised his master that he shall have instant conveyance. What pay I for his passage?'

"'My Lord,' says I, "it is impossible. By sailing with half cargo, I should lose not less than a hundred rix-dollars.'

"'Content you, man,' says he; 'you shall have two hundred for the job.' With that, he opens a large pouch of orange-tawney leather, with gold clasps, that was suspended to his

left side, and counts me out the money in Spanish ducats."

"By my troth! friend Andrew," said the smuggler, "a good bargain, and a lighter freight than the King's beer. And what further said the Admiral?"

"He tells me that I must be off with the first of ebb; and bustle enough we had, i' faith. However, an hour before the flood turned, we were all ready, and so was the High Admiral; for just as we had the fore-topsail set, and were hove short, he comes on board with my passenger."

"And what sort of a gallant was he?"

"Of that anon. 'Andrew,' said the Right Honourable Peter, as he presented the stranger to me, 'this is your man. Take heed that you discharge yourself of him well. If he have need of gold, let him have gold. If he have need of clothing, let him have clothes. Obey him, in short, in all things; and if it be reported to me that he is content with you, we shall be good friends on a future day. But if I learn that you have been playing any

of your buccaneering tricks—may the foul fiend take me—if I do not twist your neck, as sure as I would a kestrel's !' "

" A pleasant customer to deal with, Andrew."

" Ah ! not so ill as ye think. Peter is not a bad fellow if you give him all his own way. But, to finish my story. We sailed half an hour after, and had nearly made a good run of it. We had sighted St. Abbs, when the wind came round to the northward, and, for the last three days, it has blown a gale, as if all the witches in Fife had been astride on their broomsticks."

" And the galley could not face it ?"

" Is there a ship swims that could ? Yet for two days we did not amiss. We drifted some sixty miles or so ; still spars and rigging were as sound as a roach. But it was too good luck to last. The main-mast went yesterday morning ; the fore-top-mast followed last night."

" So you had nothing for it, but to turn the galley's nose to the south, and run in here."

"Even so."

"And what propose you doing?"

"That, Diccon, depends on you."

"Me? What have I to do with the matter?"

"Everything. This passenger of mine, is bound to Scotland, on matters of great urgency."

"So you have told me already."

"Well, as I cannot take him by sea, you must take him by land."

"Pshaw!" said the smuggler, with a contemptuous whistle. "My good friend, Andrew, the little brains you had, must have deserted you. To suppose that the master of a lodge like this, with things in it of inestimable value, should leave all, to convoy for a good hundred miles, some paltry knave servitor of a friend of Peter Munch."

"You are out, man—you are out."

"Why, you told me so."

"Nothing of the sort. I told you that Peter Munch said so."

"You do not think him a servant, then?"

"No."

"What then, do you take him for?"

"What do I take him for?" said Barton, starting from his seat, and pacing the room with something like agitation, "may God forgive me, if I do not sometimes believe him to be Auld Clootie himsel."

"Old who?"

"The deil, man—the black deil."

"A pretty companion, you propose, truly, giving me on my journey," said Fenwick, with a laugh. "Is he so fearful to look on, then?"

"No—no. The man is well enough, but yet he is not like a man, for he seems to see everything—to know everything—and yet to have none of the fears that other men have."

"Ay. He is a ruffler, then."

"Nothing of the sort. He is more like one of the leaden statues in the Royal Platz, at Copenhagen—just as cold and just as insensible. Why, man, yesterday, when I put the ship about (we had been laying to for eight-and-forty hours, and determined to run for it) a sea struck

us in the quarter, and the main-mast went by the board."

"Rather unpleasant."

"Had you been there, you would have said so. My men, old sea-wolves as they are, were panic-struck, and even I myself, though I am tolerably stout of heart, felt a sort of fluttering about the ribs, for I thought that it was all over with us."

"Well, but this passenger of your's?"

"Stood quietly by the rear-castle, with his arms folded, and a sort of smile upon his face, as if he had got up the storm on purpose to amuse himself, and see what stuff we were made of."

"Tush man—a bold fellow might do that, and be no devil after all."

"Possibly—but that is only one part of the story. Peter Munch called him Octavio Baldi, and said he was an Italian. Yet he speaks English as well as you or myself—conversed with the High Admiral in Danish as good as his own—gave instructions to Peter's servant, who is one of those frog-eating Mounseers from the other

side of the water, in French, and rated two of my sailors, who are from the Upper Elbe, in high Dutch."

"Well—well. Many a man who has been campaigning with the Free Companies, may do all that."

"True, but there is something more unintelligible still. Peter Munch tells me he is a servant, and yet he, the proudest noble in Denmark, takes as much trouble about this man's accommodation, as if he had been his own brother; sends me on board for his use some choice flasks of Rhenish, two wild boar hams from Westphalia, and a cask of Norway rein-deer tongues; and when he leaves the ship, pulls off his beaver and bows to him to the ground, as he bids my passenger a good voyage."

"Hilloa," cried his companion with an insulting laugh, "Stop there Andrew, my lad. You have too many cannikens of my Bordeaux in your head. What! Peter Munch, the man with his nose in the air, and who is said never to have seen his shoe strings since he was fifteen—he to bow in that fashion! You are spinning a

seaman's yarn, friend Barton, but you forget that I am only half a landsman, and know how much to believe of it."

"True man, true. On my salvation it is exactly true: and now you know the fellow, you can judge whether he is the devil or not."

"Why, certainly Andrew," said the smuggler laughing, "he is not a passenger of the common sort, and if not the devil, perhaps some other great Don in disguise."

"The less reason for you, Diccon, to object to giving him a convoy to the Scotch border, the more especially as I suspect that his pockets are pretty well lined. I saw him by chance one day open a pouch of ducats in his cabin. There was gold enough in the bag to have bought the Deutsches Fraulein six times over."

"Ha! say you so," said the smuggler as his eyes sparkled. "Is he so well provided then? It might be worth one's while to ease him on the road."

"No, no, Diccon, that were no sure game. What would Peter Munch say?"

"Who cares what he says?"

" I, for one. The High Admiral is an ugly customer to play tricks on. Do you remember his feud with the Treasurer of Denmark?"

" I' faith, not I."

" Nevertheless, there was a feud; and it was at the fiercest when we sailed on our first voyage to carry the Princess to Scotland to be married to King James. Well, we made the Firth of Forth, when we were headed by a storm from the north-west, and, after three weeks tossing, were glad to get back to Upslo, in Norway. The Princess was well nigh dead of terror and fatigue."

" What has this to do with Peter Munch?"

" Everything. Peter swore that it had been revealed to him in a dream, that the wife of his known enemy, the Lord Treasurer, had caused the gale, by her dealings with the Evil One, and so had the old woman burned as a witch. Nay, it is held that he would have burned the Lord Treasurer too, but that the Justiciary was his near kinsman, and the testimony of the witnesses was, of course, judged by him to be insufficient. No, no,

Diccon, I will not cross the path of Peter Munch."

"Cross it or not as you will. His dreams cannot dream my head off my shoulders."

"Do not be too sure of that, Diccon. There are sometimes goods in that store of yours, which," continued he with a wink, "it would not be prudent to sell on this side of the water, and then Hamburg is no bad market."

"What of that?"

"Simply this: that you may find it convenient in future years to visit it. And if Peter had a grudge at you, and you once showed your nose in the Elbe, had you fifty disguises, each as good as those of the King of Spain's best Jesuit, you were a gone man, as sure as your name is Dick Fenwick."

The truth of the remark appeared gradually to work conviction on the mind of the smuggler; for, after a minute given to reflection, he suddenly dashed down the can of wine upon the table, and exclaimed in tones of irritation:

"May the foul fiend take Peter Munch, and

all your Hogan-Mogans, who would prevent a poor fellow from striking a bold blow for a livelihood!"

His companion seemed to understand the remark; for he said, quietly:

"You see it will be dangerous."

The smuggler nodded.

"And you undertake to be true man, and conduct him across the Scotch Border?"

"For a consideration."

"How much?"

The smuggler appeared to hesitate.

"It is a great thing, Andrew," said he, coaxingly, "to ask a man to leave for a week a store like this, to be responsible for the safety of a young gallant, who, for anything I know, may be the Prince of Spain in disguise."

"No great risk, Diccon. My old gossip Dame Fenwick, will supply your place; and you know," added he, with a smile, "that the grey mare was always the better horse. And as for the consideration, that is a matter which my passenger had better settle for himself. So let's to the galley."

With these words, he proceeded to the beach, followed by the smuggler; and in another minute, the little shallop with its double freight was making its way towards the Deutsches Fräulein.

CHAPTER III.

OCTAVIO BALDI.

Has my reader visited the picture-galleries of northern Italy, and lingered before the portraits of the Worthies that clothe their walls? The study is an attractive one; for Titian and Bellini, Tintoret and Bassano, are for the most part the artists; and face and figure, plumed hat and velvet doublet, stand out from the canvas as real as at the moment of their portraiture. And yet, brilliant as the productions are as specimens of art, it is not their artistic beauty, but the strange mystery that breathes around them, that fascinates. There is something in the eye of these Machiavels of the

olden time which is inscrutable—something which suggests that we are looking not on the man represented, but on his mask; and that beneath it is an unseen, and unknown being, whose hopes and fears, wishes and ambitions, crimes and penitence, were beyond the limner's reach, and of which his pencil, eloquent as it is, gives no history.

Some such feeling as this was suggested to the mind by the expression of the young man who had been the subject of the conversation in the smuggler's hut, and who now, with his arms folded, stood leaning against the side-rails in the after part of the galley.

He was about eight-and-twenty, and dressed in a tarnished and somewhat threadbare suit of black cloth. The doublet was without ornament, except that it had a single row of buttons down the breast, and was gathered together upon the shoulder so as to form an epaulette. Beneath, was a pair of small clothes; but these, instead of terminating, as was usual, at the lower part of the thigh, covered the knee, and, like the habiliments of the present day,

were fastened below it. The lower limbs of the traveller were clothed in long and loose boots. On his head was a broad-brimmed Spanish beaver, but without feather or other decoration; and, instead of the universal ruff, a linen collar fell over the neck of his doublet. A large-sleeved horseman's cloak formed his outer garment.

The face was handsome—the nose slightly aquiline, the upper lip curled, the jaw broad, firm, and giving indisputable evidence of resolution—the eye deep blue, but large and well-opened. A moustache was on the upper lip; but the lower part of the face, instead of being covered, as was then usual in England, with a beard, had simply a tuft upon the chin. Dark auburn hair fell in ringlets over temples and neck; and the figure, spare without being thin, spoke of one who had not passed through life without experiencing its vicissitudes, but who had borrowed strength, and not weakness, from the struggle.

And, yet, as we have already said, it was not from the features, regular and handsome as they

were, that the face derived its interest. In the passenger of the Deutches Fräulein, as in the Venetian noble, it was the combination of mental and physical energy—the evident power guided by the unseen and unguessed-at will—that impressed the spectator Even the blunt sensibilities of the smuggler seemed to feel its influence; for it was with a courtesy of manner which contrasted strangely with his general demeanour, that he approached the stranger.

"Good morning to your worship," said he, as he swept the deck with his bonnet; for his sea-faring life had made him familiar with the manners of the Levant. "I bid your worship welcome to England."

"Thanks, Master Fenwick," said the traveller, as he gracefully acknowledged the courtesy. "Yet in one matter, permit me to correct you. You give me a designation to which I have no right. My master is but a plain man, and affects not the titles of the high-born and the noble; and I, a servant, would do ill to assume a rank unclaimed by my betters. You, I understand, Master Fenwick.

are a trader. So am I. Let us speak frankly, then, as brothers of the craft. They call me Octavio Baldi. By such name, therefore, I beg of you to designate me."

"Well, well, Master Octavio," said the smuggler. "Be it as you will. But to business. You are I hear for Scotland, and would have me find you a conveyance. So, at least, I learn from Master Barton."

"And you learn rightly. Can you undertake the task?"

"That depends," said the master of the Forest lodge, with a smile full of meaning.

"I understand. It depends upon the consideration."

Fenwick nodded.

"Well, and the price?"

"That depends again," replied the smuggler, with a laugh—"are your mails heavy?"

"My trunks went to Leith a month since. I have but a valise."

"So far, so good. Have you letters of credence?"

"Is a passport necessary?"

"Never more so. Since the rebellion of the two Earls on our side of the Border, and the troubles of Lord Bothwell on the other, neither English nor Scotch Wardens will let folks pass unless so provided."

The Italian mused for a moment; "I have none," said he, at length, "but that," he continued with a smile, "can be added to the price."

"It is a pleasure," said Fenwick, with a grin, "to see a man take a hint so quickly.

"We can manage without one then?"

The smuggler nodded.

"And what propose you?"

"I have told Barton," replied Fenwick, "or rather I did not tell him, but as you Master Octavio understand the principles of trade, I may tell you, that I start this afternoon for Whitworth, where I am to receive a despatch from one of our great men here, for a Scotch Lord, on the other side of the Border. I meet his messenger, privately, within fifteen miles of Carlisle, and I'll be your warrant that he put you safely on the north side of the Marches."

"Also, no doubt, for a consideration," said the Italian with a smile.

"Ay—ay—like enough," said the smuggler, scratching his head, as if conscious that the new demands upon the purse of the traveller would diminish his own claim for his services. "The fellow risks his neck by the job, and as he doubles his peril by taking charge of your worship, he will of course expect to be paid for it."

"And is he honest?"

"That is as may be."

"And you—would you trust to his honesty?"

"Would I trust a cow or a bullock within ten miles of him? Not I i'faith."

"So this courier of yours is a thief?"

"No—no, Master Octavio, not exactly a thief; he is only a moss-trooper."

"I don't see the difference."

"Oh! it's clear enough. A thief is a fellow who takes a purse from any man's pocket. A moss-trooper is but a soldier of fortune who makes a foray on his own account, and lays the strong hand on the horses, cattle, or goods of

his unfriends—a sort of rover upon land, in short, much what my friend Barton's grandfather, Sir Andrew, was on the sea."

"Quite a worshipful trade, by your showing, friend Fenwick."

"Faith, you may say that. The present Warden of the Scotch Marches, Buccleugh, holds his head with the highest, but a right poor man he would have been at this day, if his forefathers had not been as rank reivers as ever wore jack, or handled lance."

"An illustrious precedent! And this ally of yours is a bird of the same nest?"

Fenwick nodded.

"And, no doubt," said the Italian, with a sneer, "as noble as the Lord Warden?"

"Scarce less so," replied the smuggler, with perfect nonchalance. "The lad is the representative of the Barons of Mangerton, and they were the heads of their name."

"And, of course, a master workman in his craft, or otherwise he would not have been employed on so important a mission."

"You are right again, Signor. Kinmont

Willie could steal a horse from under a sleeping man, and they say, cross Tarras Moss in a night as murky as a Newcastle coal-pit."

"On my honour, Master Barton," said the Italian with something of bad humour, "your friend seems to be playing with me. I wonder what the High Admiral would say, if he heard of my being intrusted to such companionship."

"By the Lord Harry," broke in the smuggler passionately, "if you doubt me, Master Octavio, you are in error. Were you the very worshipful Peter himself, I could not trust you in safer hands. If Kinmont Willie undertake the charge of you, I would wager all the goods in my store, that he would lose life rather than any should touch a hair of your head."

The traveller appeared to hesitate.

"And where said he," after a pause, "am I to meet the fellow."

"At a small hostelry, some fifteen miles this side of the Border."

"And how am I to travel?"

"On horseback, of course."

"And the nag? For I take it for granted

you do not intend that I should risk life on one of the galled hackneys that convey your packs."

"No, no. I can contrive better than that," said Fenwick, with a contented air. "Luck is now in our favour and I can mount you like a king. It was but a year back when I chanced to be at Northallerton, and saw a colt that was the pride of the market. I took a fancy to the beast; for half-seaman as I am, I love a piece of horseflesh. I got him home all safe, but I have had nothing but trouble with the brute ever since, for the Bishop's Master of the Horse chanced to see him, and wanted to buy him for half his value. So I was e'en forced to send him over into Cumberland, to a farm of my brother's, where I stop the day after to-morrow, at noon; and he is yours if you choose to pay me his price."

"And how am I to get there?"

"Why, to my brother's, one of the pack horses must e'en serve your turn. And so far it will do well enough, for there is no danger in the Bishopric. I am well known in my own

district, and as long as you are with me you are safe."

Once more the Italian paused, as if in consideration of the plan suggested to him.

"And you?" said he, at length, turning to Barton, as if in doubt, "what say you to this?"

"By my troth" said the sailor, in a hearty tone, "I think the best thing you can do, is to accept friend Fenwick's offer. I will be warrant to the very worshipful the Admiral, that he will do his best for you."

"And this messenger—this moss-trooper—this high-born robber to whom he is to entrust me? Is he to be depended on?"

"Nay," replied Barton, "I will answer for him too, if Diccon recommend him."

The heartiness of the seaman's language seemed to remove the doubts of his passenger, for the Italian turned with a smile to the smuggler, and said: "And what am I to pay you for this."

A second time Fenwick scratched his head, and meditated for a couple of minutes as if calculating how much it would be safe to ask.

"Ten marks," said he at length, "for the

conveyance to my brother's, and forty royals for the horse."

"It is an enormous price," said the Italian, "and how much for the moss-trooper."

Again there was a pause, but a short one, as if the smuggler had less difficulty in deciding on the sum justly due to his associate, than to himself.

"Five-rose-nobles," said he, "will be sufficient. For five-rose-nobles I will undertake that Kinmont Willie put you safe on the other side of the Border."

"The charge is high, Master Fenwick," said his companion, "but your new duties may be a matter of danger to you, and it is doubtless fair, that you should be paid for the risk. But when start we, for time is precious?"

"At mid-day Master Octavio, and earlier if it be possible, for there is many a long mile before us, and riding in the dark is dangerous. But I must go and find a nag for your worship, for my orders are to be at Whitworth by supper time, and I would not that my Lord's messenger were kept waiting."

With the words he descended to the skiff,

and in two minutes after, was on his way to the Forest-lodge, under the guidance of one of the seamen.

The Italian seemed not less anxious to avoid delay, for he retired to his cabin, from which he soon after issued with a letter in his hand.

"Here friend Barton," said he, "are your credentials for the High Admiral. I have told him that I am well content with you, and that from being forced in here, I am going to Scotland over-land, under the charge of your friend Fenwick. I have added, moreover, that I shall write him from Leith, and that if all goes well, I shall pray of him to show you kindness, for my sake. So now let us to the land, for I would not delay an hour, as much depends upon my speed."

The mariner received the letter, and, with fresh assurances that all confidence might be placed in Fenwick, did his best to fulfil the wishes of his passenger. As soon as the boat returned, the saddle-bags of the Italian, and a petronel or carbine, usually worn suspended round the neck, were placed in it; and with

instructions that the rest of his sea stores and luggage should be returned to Denmark, the Traveller left the Deutsches Fräulein, and accompanied by Barton, entered the shallop, and proceeded to the smuggler's hut.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERIOUS TRAVELLER.

Fenwick kept his word. By mid-day the preparations were completed and the horses at the door. That appropriated to the Italian was precisely what his master had described him—one of the pack animals usually employed in the conveyance of his goods, and though with bone and substance enough for his ordinary occupation, not precisely such as an experienced traveller would have selected on occasions when speed was necessary, or perchance safety was at stake.

Something of this feeling might, perhaps, have expressed itself in the eyes of the Italian,

for Fenwick remarked the dissatisfied glance, and thought it necessary to reply to it.

"Ah! the beast is not a jennet, your honour. But he can do his forty miles a day; though I deny not, he takes ten hours to it. But he's merely a make shift. When you get to the other side of the Middle Fell, you shall have a horse fit for a king. Once on his back, I'll defy the best yeoman pricker in the Principality to lay hand upon your shoulder."

The Italian seemed to submit to his fate with resignation, and having once more bid adieu to Barton, commenced his journey.

There was little to interest. The road for the first day, lay through a country tolerably cultivated, and enjoying (to use the phrase in a comparative sense) civilization. Little conversation passed between the travellers. At first, indeed, Fenwick seemed disposed to indulge his curiosity, and asked several questions for the purpose of elucidating his companion's history. The attempt, however, was a vain one. Beyond the fact that his master was a goldsmith, the Signor Octavio answered nothing. He himself

as he had before stated, had been sent upon a mission on business relating to his employer; and the duties of that mission led him to Scotland.

"All true, no doubt," said the smuggler, "but we must have a different story for the folks here abouts. There is not much love for foreigners in these parts. Ever since the attempt of that Spanish Jew, Doctor Lopez, to poison Queen Bess; (ye may have heard of the thing and of his being executed last year,) there has been a sharp look out kept after any one who comes from beyond sea, and as it is not unlikely that we may chance fall in with some of the people of my Lord the Bishop, it may be as well that we have our own story ready. For, I doubt if it would consist either with your safety or mine, that a stranger from Popish lands should be found hereabouts without letters of credence. It might chance, friend, to cost us our heads."

"And what do you propose?"

"Why as you speak English as well as myself, it may not be amiss that you

pass for an Englishman. You shall be my cousin."

"Your cousin? But I must have a name?"

"My own will do well enough."

"If you are to act the part of godfather," continued his companion with a smile, "why not make me a Christian at once."

"Ah! I leave that to yourself."

"What say you to Harry?"

"It will answer as well as another, and so you shall be Harry Fenwick."

"And my trade?"

"Faith! that's a more difficult job than the other. Your hands are too white, and your body gear too fine to make a yeoman of you, or a horse-dealer, or a smuggler."

"What say you to a scrivener? I am accustomed to the pen."

"Capital! The matter is settled then. So good morning to you Harry Fenwick: good morning to my fair cousin, the notary from York." And the smuggler doffed his bonnet and bowed to his newly discovered relative with ironical courtesy.

"Nothing could be better," said the Italian, as he gravely returned the salute, "but if we are to provide against mischances, it may be as well to know where we are going."

"Faith! that's true also. My kinsman's farm, where you are to get your fresh nag, is not far off the Brampton Road. So you may say to Brampton: and it is enough in the direction of the ale-house, where we are to meet the Scotch reiver, to satisfy folks, if we chance to encounter those who are curious about business that does not concern them."

This arrangement complete, the parties continued their way in silence, each apparently wrapt in his own thoughts. Their progress though steady, was slow, and night had set in before they had reached Whitworth. Late as they were, they were still nevertheless in advance of the Bishop's messenger; and though they sat up till it chimed midnight, their vigils were in vain. He did not make his appearance, and the travellers betook themselves to rest.

At five o'clock, however, on the following morning, came the expected courier. He

enquired immediately for Fenwick, and on ascertaining his presence at the inn, hurried to the sleeping-room, which was still occupied by the smuggler and the Italian.

"Up with ye, Diccon," said he, "up and be off. There's your dispatches, and glad am I to be quit of them, for I came across some queer looking chaps in the dark last night, and more than once I doubted if I should have carried them safe to Whitworth."

"What's all this bustle about, Jack?"

"Heaven knows! But you, of course, have heard the news. Essex has been sent to the Tower, and all the folks at the palace seem to have lost their wits—my Lord the Bishop among the rest. So I suspect that what you have got to carry, has something to do with that job, for I was ordered to be in readiness at mid-day, and twelve long hours did I sit with my spurs on, before I was able to use them. But—hilloa! —hilloa!" continued he, as he turned toward the pallet bed on which lay the Italian, "what honest man is this? It might have been as well that I had kept my tongue to myself."

"All right, Jack. All safe," replied the smuggler. "Ye need fear no tell-tales."

"But who is he?"

"Ah," continued Fenwick, after a moment's hesitation, and with something of embarrassment. "A cousin of my own — one Harry Fenwick, the notary at York."

"A notary! whew?" exclaimed the Bishop's messenger, with a prolonged whistle. "I knew not Diccon, that you had kith and kin of such high degree. But d'ye hear? To your legs, I say. My orders from Master Wyvill be strict and peremptory, that I see ye on the road in half-an-hour, after my arrival. So up with ye and into your boots, and that instantly."

Fenwick, it might be to save further questioning, with regard to his new relative, did his best to second the impatience of the courier, and after a hasty morning meal, the parties once more put foot in stirrup.

The second day's journey was destined to be as uneventful as the first. The travellers followed the course of the Tees, and slept at a little inn at no great distance from its source.

On the ensuing morning they once more resumed their route.

The scene around them was little cheering. They had quitted the cultivated district shortly after leaving Whitworth, and exchanged it for low green hills which sank gently to the river, and were broken here and there by tracts of natural forest. As the road rose, the country grew wilder — the timber exhibited itself in diminished quantities—the herbage became mixed with heath, and that in its turn gradually assumed a mossy character, or showed itself at rare intervals amongst the rocky acclivities, which cropped up above the bare surface, and lent their aid to enhance the sterile features of the landscape.

"We are on the top of the range, now," said Fenwick. "Do you mark that the water scarce knows which way to run—twisting and turning like an eel in the mud—making a pool here, and a moss there. Ay, it's bad riding on Middle Fell after night-fall. There's many a good steed stabled in the quagmires hereabouts. But in another half hour, we'll be down upon Tyne, and

will strike the mainroad from the south. After that the causeway is good enough."

Accordingly as the smuggler had predicted, the track which for half-an-hour had straggled across a level surface, largely interspersed with stagnant water, began to descend. Shortly after, appeared below the as yet shallow currents of the Tyne, and along its banks ran the great highway which led from Barnard Castle to the northward.

As they reached it, they became aware of the presence of another wayfarer, who was coming up the southern road. He seemed to be bound in the same direction as themselves, and shortly after, Fenwick and the Italian had gained the main highway, he overtook them.

The stranger was a little thin man of about fifty. The face had something of a Jewish character—the forehead large and lofty—the nose aquiline—the eyes small, dark, deep-set, restless and intelligent.

The mouth and chin were so completely lost in a large beard, that it was difficult to catch their character, but as far as could be gathered,

the lips were thin and wore a satirical expression; while the whole appearance suggested the idea of a superabundance of wit and energy, without, at the same time, conveying to the spectator any disposition to trust himself to the benevolence of the impulses, by which they might be directed.

The individual in question was dressed in the garb of a yeoman of the period—a loose short frock of kersey with hose of the same material, large boots, and beaver hat without feather. He was well armed, however. A long sword, to judge from the character of its hilt, of the best material, was suspended from his side; and in addition, he was apparently provided with fire-arms, as two large holsters were attached to the front of the saddle.

The animal which carried him, was the *beau-ideal* of a hackney—the head small—the eye bright—the barrel large and well rounded—the limbs strong, with plenty of bone and muscle, but clean about the fetlock.

The stranger came up at a fast trot, as if with the intention of passing Fenwick and his companion. Something, however, seemed to have

arrested his attention, and caused a change of plan; for he suddenly checked his horse, and accommodating himself to the slower pace, at which the smuggler's pack animals were jogging onwards, bade his new companions good morning. The salute was returned, and the two parties commenced their mutual survey.

That of the smuggler and the Italian was made rapidly. The stranger did not so readily come to a conclusion. With regard to Fenwick, it is true, a single glance was sufficient to satisfy his curiosity, but when he had turned from him to his companion, the task was less easy. Again and again did the keen black eyes examine face and dress, but apparently with little result; for there was a puzzled air in the look. As for the object of the scrutiny, he bore it with the most perfect philosophy. For one instant, indeed, when the traveller had first met his eye, the Italian gave a slight start, as if he had caught sight of an unwelcome object. But ere the newcomer had joined them, the cloud which had for a moment shaded his brow, had passed away, and his face resumed its usual calm unruffled

expression ; and he now sustained the prolonged examination with an air of unconsciousness or indifference.

All this which has taken some time to relate, passed in a moment, and the three now jogged on abreast, the Italian holding the centre of the road, with Fenwick on his right hand, and his new acquaintance on his left.

"A fine morning, gentlemen, for travelling," said the stranger "whither may I ask are ye bound?"

"For Brampton, Sir," said Fenwick, taking the initiative in the reply.

"And you are from Durham, no doubt. Be there any news in these parts?"

"None."

"What no news from Court?"

"Nay," said the Italian, as, at a glance, he detected the embarrassment of the smuggler, and felt the necessity of taking the conversation into his own hands; "you, Sir, are from the south, and it is to you that we should apply for an answer to such a question."

"No—no!" said the new comer, in a some-

what hurried tone. "Down my way, nothing worth speaking of. But do you travel for pleasure or amusement, for, if I judge aright, you are no native of these parts."

"Ha!" said the Italian, "you think so, do you?—and why?"

"Oh! simply because we Durham folks don't wear Holland shirts, or have a skin like a Maid's of Honour; or mouth the Queen's English as well as one of Her Grace's courtiers."

"Ah! your Honour is probably a judge. None of us, but yourself, have had the happiness to see Maids' of Honour skins, or to know how courtiers speak our language."

The stranger's cheek flushed a little, and he bit his lip.

"You mistake," said he hastily, "I know nothing either of courts, or those who inhabit them."

"Nay it may be so. But you were saying that my skin was like that of one of the Queen's maidens, and my tongue like a Queen's courtier's; and I judged that so shrewd-witted a person, as you seem to be, would scarce speak of what he did not understand."

"You are sharp on me, fellow?"

"It is my trade," said the Italian, with a smile. "I am a notary."

"And you practise sifting expressions?"

"Yes. It's my business to find out the truth in all cases, whether it be concealed beneath a man's language — or a man's dress."

The words were spoken carelessly, but they seemed to have jarred disagreeably upon the ear of the new comer, for once more his cheek coloured, and a slight shade passed over his brow.

"What!" replied he with a laugh, apparently intended to cover his embarrassment—"a lawyer, and wish to find out the truth?"

"In an opponent's case—yes."

"But in your own!"

"Ah! that is a different matter."

"So in your business, there is something to conceal, is there?"

"That is a matter for you to discover?"

"Well, I doubt not I have discovered it already. You are no notary!—look there?"

And he pointed to the Italian's knee. The long boot had slipped down, and left to view the lower part of the hose, or small clothes as we should have termed them at the present day. Generally speaking, as we have before mentioned, they terminated above the knee, where they met a long stocking. Those of the traveller, however, like the small-clothes of a later period, came down to the top of the calf of the leg.

"Why, my good fellow," continued he triumphantly, "these Venice hose are the latest fashion; they have not been more than six months in vogue. You are some roysterer from Alsatia."

"And if I were," replied the Italian quietly, "I can make oath, that in all my experiences I never met with anything more astonishing than a Durham yeoman, who is acquainted with courts and courtiers—the cut of Venice hose, or the appearance of the roaring boys of Whitefriars. But you are wrong! I am but a scrivener from York."

"A rake-helly apprentice you mean, going

to amuse yourself without your master's knowledge."

"Should I be so, I should not be the only one abroad, who was out without the knowledge of master—or *mistress*."

There was something like emphasis on the concluding word, but beyond this there was neither in language or intonation, any thing to attract special notice. The effect on the traveller, however, was evident enough, for he grew pale as death, and as if he had been seized with sudden giddiness, involuntarily grasped the pummel of his saddle.

"Come, come," said he in a conciliatory tone, and as soon as he had recovered his self-possession, "have done with this jeering. We are both no doubt good men and true. So let us speak of other matters than ourselves. And you have heard no news?"

"Nothing particular."

"There was a talk where I came from," said the new comer in a slightly fluttered tone, "of the arrest of some gallant of the court. Heard you anything of that?"

"Yes, something of the sort."

"Did you hear the name?"

"That was precisely the question I was about to ask you."

The stranger hesitated for a moment, and then continued.

"It was but a vague rumour, but the talk was of my Lord of Essex. Was he the man spoken of, down your way?"

The Italian nodded.

"The report must have surprised you?"

"Not at all."

"What!" exclaimed the stranger in astonishment, "is it no surprise to you, to hear of the arrest of a favourite of the Queen's?"

"It is no surprise to me to hear of a man losing his head, who tries to climb higher than he should."

Again the stranger's features wore a look of anxiety. He resumed, however.

"It is like to prove an evil chance for him."

"And for others."

"Others! what have others to do with it?"

"Nay, I know not, but I have ever remarked that when a young rogue of a village got into an orchard, and began to climb up an apple tree, there were never wanting some half dozen scapegraces to follow at his heels."

"What of that?"

"Only this, that if the leader chanced to tumble, he generally contrived to bring down some of his associates along with him."

Once more the conversation seemed to have adopted a painful form to the new arrival, for he again paused for awhile, as if embarrassed.

"By my honour, Sir Scrivener," said he, at length, "York may be proud of you. You speak in allegories, and allegories smack of the muses. If your bills, bonds, indentures, and obligations be as full of conceits as your language, they must be dangerous."

"Dangerous to my clients you should say," replied the Italian with a laugh. "As to those that are dangerous to myself, I follow the example of wiser men and — *burn them.*"

The Italian looked full at his companion as he

spoke. The glance was frank, good humoured, careless, but the effect on the traveller was not the less extraordinary, for he checked his horse suddenly, and gazed at the speaker with a face which made no attempt to conceal its terror. Suddenly he touched his nag with the spur, and placed himself alongside Fenwick.

"I am in haste, Sir Merchant," said he, "and must on. You, I suppose follow the Allston road, but I am bound for Carlisle, and will take this track to the left."

With the words, he gave his mettled steed his head, and scarcely waiting to bid adieu to his companions, struck off along a sheep track to the north-west, and was soon lost to sight.

"He's a queer chap that," said Fenwick, as he watched his progress, "though what you said to him, or he to you, for the life of me, I could not comprehend. However, I'm glad he's gone, anyhow. His companionship might have been dangerous. But come, we must be jogging, for we are late already."

They pushed on at their best speed, but the horses were well nigh exhausted, and it was two

in the afternoon before they reached the farm of Fenwick's relative, where they were to be supplied with a remount.

A meal was hurriedly prepared for them, but as the Italian's new purchase had to be got ready, and a fresh horse procured for his guide, it was late ere they were able to proceed on their journey.

"It is but ten miles," said the smuggler, as they moved along at a hand gallop, "we'll do the distance by sun-down. And isn't he a beauty I sold you; and well you ride him. There's not a horse-couper in the Principality has a better seat. But this is no time for talk. We must on." And the travellers continued to move at a rapid pace.

The sun was sinking fast as they came over the brow of the hill, upon a wooded valley. A little river ran through it, now stretching in long reaches, whose placid surface was gilded by the setting sun, and now pouring down its waters in a rapid and foaming stream.

"We have but a quarter of a mile more before us," said Fenwick, "and we'll then be at the

hostelry. But what's this?" continued he, as his eye caught the figure of a man, who advanced towards them along the narrow track, waving his bonnet in air, as if to attract notice.

"It's Tom Dixon," said he, in astonishment. "It's the good-man of the alehouse himself. There is some mischance, or he would not have come all this way to meet us."

And certainly, the smuggler, to judge from appearances, was right, for the figure continued to approach at a rapid pace, gesticulating at intervals, as if in the very extremity of despair.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOSS-TROOPER.

THE travellers soon came up to him.

"What, in the name of the foul fiend is the matter with you, Tom Dixon? Have you been playing toper, as well as tapster, and got drunk on your own liquor?"

"No, no, Diccon," said the new comer; "sober as you are. But you must back. You must away—there is danger here."

"How? Has aught happened to the Scotch Rider?"

The host, instead of giving a direct answer, cast a suspicious glance at the Italian. It was understood; for Fenwick hastened to reply.

"All right, Tom. You may speak safely before him. He's a true man—I have it upon sure evidence."

"No," replied the host, "the Scotch Rider is here, and has been here since morning, though I could scarce persuade him to await your coming; for you are long, long behind time, Diccon."

"Well, if he is safe—what's wrong?"

"Why, you must know, that at mid-day comes to me a messenger from my Lord, with orders to clear the house, as he expected to meet some one here to-night, and wished to be private."

"My Lord Scrope coming here?" said Fenwick, with astonishment.

"True as I'm a living man."

"And when comes he?"

"The messenger said at dusk; and the sun is sinking fast. So, as I wish not to see the inside of the stone jug of the Castle of Carlisle, give me the packet for the moss-trooper, and be off."

"Softly there, friend Tom," said Fenwick,

with a droll smile. "There are stone rooms and gyves in the palace of my Lord the Bishop, as well as in the Castle of the Warden; and I may chance to taste of both, if I deliver the packet into any hands but those of the man I'm sent to. Let me but once be fairly quit on't, and I care not how soon I turn my face to the south. That Lord Warden of yours is reported to be an ugly customer."

"That's true, Diccon; more especially for folks like yourself, who have sometimes goods in their pack that are not paid for. But, if ye must see Kinmont Willie, get ye forward, in God's name."

Apparently, the smuggler required but little prompting, for he made his way rapidly, accompanied by his companions, to the door of the hostelry.

It was a long, low building, one story high, and with a tall and steep roof. The centre was occupied by a large apartment, generally appropriated to the use of the guests, and rising to the full height of the house. At one end was the kitchen, the ordinary dwelling of the

host and his family; at the other, a chamber of corresponding size—the solitary sleeping room for visitors. The kitchen and the bed-room had not, however, the loftiness of the centre apartment. On the contrary, their ceilings were of the same elevation as the walls—the attics above being appropriated, at one end as a store for lumber; at the other, as the dormitory of the host and hostess.

At the kitchen door (for the three chambers on the ground floor had no internal communication, and the solitary portal of each opened directly on the road) stood a young man, about twenty. In height, he was somewhat under six feet, but his breadth of shoulder, and litheness of arm and limb, showed the strength of a Hercules. With all this, his face and person were singularly handsome. The hair was fair, with a slight tinge of yellow; the eye bright blue, in which reckless daring, fun, and good temper, were strangely mingled. The upper lip short and curled, and covered with a slight moustache; the teeth like a young hound's; the chin round; the jaw firm.

His dress was that of the military retainers of the period. A buff coat, somewhat the worse for wear, and showing here and there the fraying of the jack or cuirass. Beneath, were dark coloured small clothes, and long boots of untanned leather, reaching to the thigh. On his head, was a broad-brimmed Spanish hat. By his side was a short sword called a whinger, and in his belt two dags, or long pistols.

"Ye dinna keep tryst, Maister Fenwick," said he. "Gude twal hours after time."

"True, Willie, man—true. But he that rides with the Bishop's papers, must ride when the Bishop pleases. I have not lost a moment."

"Weel—weel—maybe. But gie us the packet, man; for it's like I may be forced to put fit in stirrup at short notice."

"There's my load, Willie. I am as blythe to get quit of it, as you to have it. And now that I have got done my Lord's business, I would do something of my own. Willie," con-

tinued he, pointing to the Italian. "Do you see this young gentleman?"

"I'm no blind."

"I'm wanting you to convoy him over the Border."

"It's no possible," was the decided reply.

"But it is possible. You are to have for it five gold nobles."

"It's no possible, I tell ye. I'm jealousing that I'll hae to ride for't."

"Why, what's chanced? What has gone wrong?"

"As I cam' ower Bewcastle Waste yestreen, I chanced upon a man—ane of my un-freends. It was dark eneugh—but I suspect he kenned me; and if he gied information at the Ford, thae will hae set the sleuth-hound on my track afore noo."

"But still, that need not prevent your taking this gentleman along with you."

"It does prevent me. For if we Borderers undertak' for a man's safety, we keep pledge, come what may."

"Not always Willie. Remember Hector of Harlaw."

"Ay—Ecky shamed the country's side. But excep' in the case of my Lord of Northumberland, wha ever heard o' a Borderer betraying his trust. At least, nane shall say that of Kinmont Willie. Sae yer freend there maun find anither guide."

During the course of this conversation, the landlord of the little inn had exhibited no unfrequent signs of impatience and alarm: but when it became evident that the negotiation between the smuggler, and the young Borderer, was unlikely to lead to any result, he could no longer restrain himself.

"You see it's no use Diccon," said he, "so be off with you. I tell you I expect the Warden from minute to minute, and if, after his orders to clear the house, my Lord found any one loitering about the place, I should be a ruined man."

Fenwick appeared puzzled.

"'Tis no fault of mine," said he, at length,

turning to the Italian, "I have done my best for your worship, and a man can do no more."

For a minute, the Italian seemed uncertain what to do. Suddenly he turned to his guide, and whispered "I will try my luck myself."—With the words, he rode his horse up to the door, and addressed the Borderer.

"And so, young Sir, you will not take me with you."

"Impossible."

"And why?"

"If I tak' the charge o' ye, I'm answerable for ye—and if I guess aright, I shall hae fash eneugh the night in saving my ain neck, forbye your's."

"Why so? where you can go, I can follow."

"No sae sure o' that. My red mear is the fastest thing on the Border."

"Nay, as for that Willie," broke in Fenwick, "he's as well mounted as yourself. I've sold him the Northallerton colt, and there was never a better piece of horse flesh foaled in the Bishopric."

The moss-trooper turned eagerly, and moving

round the animal that carried the Italian, examined it carefully, and with a practised eye.

"And that's the Northallerton colt," said he, at length, "weel it's a likely naig eneugh, if a' be as good as what's up come. But can your freend," continued he, pointing with his thumb to the Italian, "can he ride him?"

"Like a man."

"And the horse is fresh?"

"But done his ten miles, and could do fifty more, if need were, without drawing bit."

There was an expression of indecision about the moss-trooper's face. The Italian hastened to take the advantage of it.

"Come," said he, "Sir Borderer, be a good fellow. So let us be comrades. I will make the five gold nobles, ten; and, moreover, promise to follow you over bush and scaur, mountain and meadow, ditch and river."

"And do as ye're bidden?"

"In all things."

"Be it a bargain then. Maister Fenwick, I'll tak' your freend."

"Thank Heaven," said the smuggler. "So

I'm off! but ere I go—jump, Sir Traveller, from your saddle, and sign me this quittance. It is in the hand-writing of Andrew Barton, and must be returned to him, announcing your safety."

The Italian obeyed—the signature was speedily added. It was carefully perused by Fenwick. As carefully was it consigned to the recesses of his greasy pocket-book; and with a hearty farewell, he turned his horse's head to the southward, and proceeded at a rapid pace to retrace his steps.

Scarcely was he gone, when the Borderer turned to his host.

"Tam," said he, "up with the naig to the byre, ahint the knowe. Slacken his girths, but let the saddle be. Tak the bridle out of his mouth, but leave it on his neck. It's ill looking for sic things in the dark. Stint him in his water, but gi'e him as muckle corn as he likes to put his nose into. And now, Sir Comrade," continued he turning to the Italian, "set to wark at that venison pasty. And Doll Dixon!—gude wife, I say,

gie this gallant here, a stoup o' yer hame brewed. Na, eat and drink man," continued he with a laugh. "Ye promised to obey orders. So mak the best of your time, for Gude kens whan you may hae a mouthfu' ower your thrapple again."

Thus enforced, the Italian applied himself zealously to his agreeable duties. The hurried meal was scarcely over, and the innkeeper had just returned to inform them of the horse being safely deposited in the shed, when Dame Dixon, who had been on the look out, rushed in to inform them, that "a man on foot was coming up the side of the river, in the direction of the hostelry, and that from his appearance, and bearing, she judged him to be the Warden."

"It's my Lord himself, sure enough," shouted the innkeeper, as he surveyed the approaching figure from a side window; "so clear away, old girl. Off with the pasty and tankards to the cupboard, mop down the table, arrange the settles against the wall; if he chance to poke his nose into the kitchen, there must be nothing to hint to him, that there be any

in the house but ourselves. And now lads," said he, turning to his two guests "to roost. You know the secret chamber of old, Willie; and ye must to it as deer to its covert. I will apprize ye of danger, if I learn of any. But ye must look and listen for yourselves, and if ye are forced to make a start of it, remember the bole in the roof."

"No—no!" continued he, as the Italian offered payment, "Dick Fenwick will settle all that. The Bishop, like a prince as he is, pays nobly for his messengers."

With the words he ascended the rickety staircase in the corner of the kitchen, and followed by his companions, made his way to the apartment over head.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET CHAMBER.

On gaining the top of the staircase, the party found themselves in the host's bed-chamber. The room was of no great size, and nearly one half of it was filled by a large four-post-bed with heavy curtains. It occupied the centre of the apartment, for the ceiling of the room accommodated itself to the slope of the roof, and thus prevented an approach to the front or back wall.

There might be another reason for the selection of its position. The head of the bed was, so to speak, towards the interior gable

end; but at about eighteen inches distant from it. Into this nook the host glided, and touched a spring in the wooden partition. A panel flew open and gave access to a small, and dark closet beyond. In length, it extended the whole breadth of the house, but was scarcely more than three feet wide. The intention of the ingenious architect had evidently been to make the host's bed-room approach so closely in size to the kitchen beneath, as to prevent any suspicion of the existence of a secret chamber connected with it. A suspicion that otherwise might have readily suggested itself; for the times which witnessed and preceded the reigns of the Tudors were troublous and changeful. The favourite of fortune, of one day—was the outlaw and beggar of the next. The vassal for the most part, rose and fell with his Lord, and thus high and low, noble and peasant, were compelled to furnish themselves with some City of Refuge, in which they might rest in safety until the evil hour had passed away.

The little chamber, though dark, was sufficiently well aired: for rafter and tile formed

the roof, and the northern blasts found their way through its crevices. But window there was none, unless the term be applied to an opening at the back of the house, which was closed by a bole, or wooden shutter, painted on the outside so as to resemble the general tint of the exterior.

It had one other aperture, but that was too remarkable, not to deserve special notice. It has been mentioned, that the centre of the building, was occupied with the apartment of the guests, and that its ceiling rose as high as the tile work. The extreme portions of the edifice, or its wings as they may be called, were however divided into two storeys—the lower rooms rising only to the height of the stone work, while the garrets above, took the dimensions and the shape, which was left them by the roof itself. It thus followed, that the wall of the interior gables, formed a connecting link between the central apartment, and those in the upper part of the wings. The fact had suggested an idea to the architect. He had

made a communication between the chamber of refuge, and the public room which adjoined it.

Church architecture, was, *par excellence*, the early architecture of England, and the improvements which from time to time displayed themselves in the domestic edifices of the people, were with few exceptions borrowed from this source. For nations are essentially imitative. An individual may, at rare intervals, receive from the Divinity, inspiration enough to create, but the masses, for the most part, content themselves with aping what has been already created. In the cathedrals, and in such of the churches as affected decoration, no ornament was a greater favourite with ecclesiastical architects than the St. Catherine's wheel, or the beautiful circular window, which is so generally to be found in the sacred edifices of England. It was frequently copied in private buildings; and it had suited the taste, or the convenience, of the Vitruvius of the little hostelry, to introduce it into its interior.

At either extremity of the sitting apartment, and occupying the centre of the triangle, formed by the gable ends of its upper portion, had been introduced the ornament in question. It was coarsely carved in wood, and to the occupants of the room itself, had the appearance merely of an alto-relievo, or excrescence on the panelled walls. And such it was, in fact, except towards the secret chamber. There the wall was completely perforated. The back ground, indeed, was covered by boarding, painted of the same colour as the rest of the woodwork, but a portion of this moved upon a hinge, and could be opened, at will, by the tenants of the concealed apartment. Thus hidden themselves, they had the opportunity of seeing and hearing every thing that passed below; and thus the host—half smuggler—half deer stealer, as well as his trusted, and equally respectable associates, had the power of becoming acquainted with a thousand secrets, which the guests of the hostelry imparted, in confidence to each other, in the belief that

their words fell upon no ears but their own.

Kinmont Willie had been more than once dispatched upon secret missions to the little inn, and Tom Dixon, who was Scotch by parentage, and who had perfect confidence in the discretion and the prudence of his Border countryman, had made the young moss-trooper acquainted with the hidden chamber, and its secrets—the bole, or opening in the outer wall, and the shutter which enabled him to see or hear what passed in the room below.

Such was the apartment into which were now introduced, the Italian and his future guide. It was, as we have said, completely dark, and its only furniture, a thick coarse rug of horse hair, which covered it from end to end, and was, probably, intended to prevent the footsteps of its tenants being heard below.

"Now, Willie," said the host as he entered, accompanied by his companions, "here you are in your old quarters. Remember, snug's the word. So keep quiet, and I'll let you know when

the folks are gone to roost. For, of course, you would wish to put foot in stirrup as soon as you can with safety. But you know the secret of the shutter, and must peer out for yourself, my lad. You may chance to see, or hear something, that will make an earlier start convenient. So fare ye well, in case I should not see ye again, for I must be off to receive the Warden."

With the words, he shook his two guests heartily by the hand, and left the crib, closing the panel after him.

"A queer place this, freend," said the young moss-trooper to his companion, "but vara convanient at times. Though, to say the truth, I wad sooner be on the red mear's back, than in the Chamber of Dais of the best king in Christendom. But sit ye down, and I'll open the shutter; and I doubt na', we'll hear some queer stories. And, forbye that, ye'll see Lord Scrope, and he's worth the seeing, for he's an awfu' fallow. There's no a month, but he has a wheen lads up at Hairibee. He hangs mair

than a' the other Keepers o' the Marches thegither. Eh! he's a grand Warden!"

But Willie's eloquence was arrested in its course, for at that moment, Tom Dixon opened the door of the apartment below, and gave admission to his distinguished visitor.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO OFFICIALS OF QUEEN BESS.

THE new comer was well worthy the eulogiums of the young Borderer. He was a man of two or three and thirty, and rather above six feet, with broad shoulders, and strongly made. The forehead was well developed and lofty, the hair auburn, the eye large, blue, frank, and fearless. The chin, covered with a short beard, was full and somewhat square, and the step and bearing, those of one, who had from infancy possessed a high rank, and almost unlimited authority.

He was dressed in a doublet, cloak, and hose, of Lincoln green, and a cloth bonnet of the same

material and colour, was on his head. Large loose boots of Spanish leather, after the universal fashion, came midway up his thigh. On his left hand was a hawking glove, while in his right, he carried a long staff, pointed with iron, such as was generally used by the varlets of the falconer, to beat the bushes at the side of the river, when looking for herons, wild ducks, or other water game.

"Well, Tom," said he, as he received the profound obeisances of the host, with the careless indifference of one to whom such respect was familiar, "you received my orders?"

"I did, my lord."

"And have obeyed them?"

"There is no one now here, but my wife and myself."

"It is well. Now mark me. I expect a traveller to-night, and would have speech of him. See that there be no eaves-dropping. If I find any ears near the door, they may chance to have another resting place than the head of their present owner. The traveller will remain till to-morrow. So let Dame Dixon have his sleeping

quarters ready. And remember, name to no one my presence here, or his. If you or your wife be talking, the Spinning House at Carlisle, and the stone room in the Castle, may chance to receive new occupants. So off with you, and be on the look-out for my guest. He is a little man with a large grey beard, and you will know if it be him, I expect, by his asking if there be any one waiting for him from the Warden. And now bring lights."

The innkeeper hastened to obey. A lamp was placed upon the centre table: two others were suspended from nails driven into the wall, and having carefully closed his shutters, and learned that nothing more was wanted of him, Tom Dixon withdrew.

Lord Scrope was alone. For some minutes he paced the room with hurried steps.

"Bowes has asked a meeting," said he, at length, speaking aloud in the full confidence of his solitude, "and given me rendezvous here. What seeks he on this side of the Border? Why his anxiety for secrecy? Well, I suppose I shall hear all in time. That is, I shall hear what he

wishes me to believe; for as to the real state of things, that is what no one ever gets from my friend the Ambassador, except when it suits his purpose. And yet his present journey must have some connexion with those reports about Essex: for if Fame speak true, he was deep in his councils. But here no doubt he comes."

At that moment, a horse's feet were heard in the distance, and after a short interval, the door opened, and the traveller, who, in the morning, had been the companion of Fenwick and the Italian, entered the room.

So long as the host, who introduced him, was present, the manner of the new comer was distant and humble, and the reverential bow with which he honoured Lord Scrope, that of a man who finds himself in the presence of one infinitely his superior. No sooner, however, had the master of the hostelry departed, and the door closed, than this by-play was discarded, and he advanced to the Warden with the air and bearing of an equal.

"Welcome," said he, with affected ceremony, "to the Viceroy of the North."

"And welcome," replied Scrope, in a similar tone, as he shook the proffered hand, "to the Ambassador of England to King James. What does his Excellency away from Holyrood? What seeks he on this side the Border?"

"Can't you guess?"

"Something about the affairs of Lord Robert?"

"Even so."

"Ay—I fancied as much. I heard a week since, that he had been mad enough to come over from Ireland without leave."

"Worse—worse. I heard a week since, that he had gone, without leave, into the Queen's dressing-room."

"By heavens! Bowes, that was no great offence. The Lord Admiral did so fifty times, and with impunity."

"Yes, but a woman's beauty is her power; and so long as the power exists, where is she, who, in her secret heart, regrets its display? The Princess of sixteen, knew that her charms lost nothing by her deshabille, and she pardoned. The Queen is seventy, and a woman of

seventy never forgives a man seeing her, but in full dress."

"So," said Scrope laughing, "the boldness that made Seymour's fortune, is likely to ruin Essex's."

"Is likely to ruin them? Has ruined them, you should say. Lord Robert is in the Tower!"

"What!" exclaimed Scrope, in accents of the most intense astonishment.

"True, as I am a living man."

"God help me!" said the Warden, as he sank into a chair, overwhelmed by the communication, "this will be heavy news to my wife."

"She loved her cousin well."

"Who did not love him? He was a fellow of a thousand."

"And yet," said Bowes with a sneer, "though you rated him so highly, you were not of his party."

"I was so in everything, but in his mad ambition."

"Of what speak you?"

"Do *you* ask," said Scrope, drawing himself up with an expression of indignant astonish-

ment. "You, who are in every man's secret, do you affect ignorance?"

"You do me too much honour," said his companion demurely, "so I must take the liberty of repeating the question."

"Have it answered then," said Lord Scrope, in a petulant tone, "it is whispered widely, that after Queen Bess's death, Lord Robert hoped to make himself King of England. Nay, since I am forced to speak plainly, it is said upon no doubtful grounds, that he who first suggested the idea, and most encouraged him to follow it, was Sir Robert Bowes."

"The world does me too much honour," replied his companion with a sneer. "I am not the Machiavel they take me for. I meddle not in plottings; and what I do, I do simply and without concealment."

"And this is the proof of it," said Scrope, with a contemptuous laugh, as he raised the cloak of the traveller. "Here is a dress which my fashioner, if he were extravagant, would value at three angels, and yet it forms the clothing of the wealthy Baron of Streatlam—of Sir Robert

Bowes, the Ambassador of the Queen of England to the King of Scots—who generally arrayed in velvets and satins, and with a dozen spears, and twice as many blue coated serving men at his heels, now, for greater publicity, and because he wishes his doings to be always above board and known to the public, travels—drest as a lacquey and alone. Ha! ha! ha!"

And the Border noble laughed loud and long, till the room echoed with his merriment.

Bowes gave him a sinister look from the corner of his snake-like eye.

"Your gaiety misleads you, Lord Scrope," said he. "It was not concealment, but haste, that was my object. The Romans called of old, the baggage, and those who looked after it, *impedimenta*, and they were right. Retainers on a journey ever clog one's movements."

"Well, let the frieze jerkin pass, but what say you to our present meeting. You gave me rendezvous here, and enjoined secrecy. Was this another mode of shewing your passion for publicity? Why not have come to Carlisle?"

"I will be frank with you. For once I should be well pleased to hide my light under a bushel. So I came not to Carlisle, because I feared that some of your retainers might have recognised me; and lest the same evil chance had befallen me, with your watchmen at the Fords, I gave you rendezvous here, to ask you for old acquaintance sake, to discredit their report."

"And where the danger of the recognition?"

"They might have advised the Queen of my presence in England."

"Ha! the old dame believes you still at Holyrood?"

Bowes nodded.

"And you have left your post without leave."

Again Sir Robert intimated acquiescence.

"And you thought our gracious Mistress might make a Star Chamber matter of it."

"Yes! she loves the chink of the gold pieces well, and so fair an excuse for levying a fine upon Streatlam, might not have been resisted."

"Nay, if that be all your fear, let your head lay easy on its pillow. I keep sharp rule in

my Wardenry; and if any of my knaves should have chanced to remark you, not a whisper of it shall go south of Carlisle: so rest ye content on that head. And now that this mysterious visit of yours has served its purpose, open your budget, and let us hear the news. When left you Edinburgh?"

"Five days by gone."

"And you have been to Streatlam: for I marked your horses tramp, and you came by the south road."

Once more Bowes gave a sign of assent, but this time, apparently with something of unwillingness.

"Four days to go, and one day thence on your return. By my honour, it does credit to your horsemanship; and all for a twelve hours visit. Well now I think of it, you must have started just after you heard of poor Robin's intrusion on that vain old fool, and her tyring women. Whew!" continued he, with a long whistle, "the thing's as plain as a pike staff. You went there upon the affairs of my Lord of Essex."

"I told you so before. I wished to have instant news of his fortunes."

"Pooh! a courier could have brought you the intelligence. What you did *not* tell me, was that you wished to do something with your own hands, which it would have been dangerous to entrust to another to do for you. You are said to have been deep in these plottings of poor Robin's. You feared that you had connected yourself with a fallen house, and you went to destroy the evidence of the connection."

Bowes made no answer.

"Ha!" continued his companion, as if a sudden thought had flashed upon his brain—"now I can read your mystery. It was this mishap of Essex, that was the true occasion of your summons here to-day. Conceal your presence in England, quotha! Why man, it was not the visit to Streatlam, but the reasons likely to be assigned for the visit, that made you hold Queen Bess's knowledge of it dangerous."

Still Bowes spoke not, but, as if the subject were painful to him, moved uneasily in his

chair. Scrope observed the annoyance, and hastened to relieve it.

"Nay—don't vex yourself, man," said he. "I tell no tales."

"Lord Scrope, there are no tales to tell—but your suspicion is natural. The Queen has no heir, and her days are numbered. Every man in England must be thinking of her successor, and it is not impossible, that some may be plotting, to secure the throne to the one they approve."

"I said so, man, I said so," said Scrope joyously, "and why not you? But, I repeat, I tell no tales."

"If there were such," said Bowes quietly, and fixing his eye steadily on his companion, "you would not dare to tell them."

"Oh, *par dieu!* that is a little too much! What is it that Thomas Scrope of Bolton would not dare do?"

"To accuse me, or any well informed, like me, of plotting in favour of a successor to the crown of England."

"And why—pray—" said Scrope, in a hearty

tone, as he sank down upon a bench, and stretching out one of his large limbs upon the floor carelessly, flung himself back against the wall."

"Simply because Lord Scrope is plotting himself."

The Warden could scarce repress an exclamation of surprise, but his iron nerves retained their power, and feature and limb gave no sign.

"My friend, the Ambassador," said he coldly, "is getting angry, and angry men indulge in charges they cannot prove."

"So do not I! Has your Lordship," continued he, in a low quiet tone, and fixing his look intently upon his companion, "has your Lordship, I repeat, ever heard of a lady called RIALTA, or an illustrious personage, who, for the nonce, has been called VICTOR?"

Lord Scrope coloured in spite of himself, and stole an anxious glance at his companion.

Bowes' keen eye marked it well.

"Ha! Lord Warden," continued he, in a mocking tone, and as if he enjoyed the confusion he had caused, "said I well. Are we Ambassa-

dors wiser than you dreamed of? You look aghast, because I know of Lady Rich's correspondence with him of Holyrood. Pshaw! man, that is nothing. I could tell you of plottings that touch you more nearly than those of your fair wife's fair cousin."

Once more Lord Scrope's cheek flushed crimson, but by a strong effort he recovered himself.

"I comprehend you not," said he, in a cold tone, "you speak in Parables."

"Yet such are not beyond the science of your house; for they who deliver a token, which tells of a dead woman to a living man, act Parables, if they speak them not. Did your Lordship ever chance to hear of a *blue ring*?"

The words were simple enough, but they seemed to have upon him, to whom they were addressed, the effect of a galvanic battery, for he sprang to his feet, and with an expression of astonishment, which he did not seek to conceal, exclaimed as he surveyed his companion from top to toe. "I do not see the cloven hoof, but he must be the Devil."

"Not exactly," said Sir Robert, laughing, —"only one of his intimates."

"And what, on this occasion, was the information communicated by your ally below stairs."

"Nay, it is unnecessary to trouble him in so simple a matter. Would you learn it; ask of your brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cary, or your Lady-bright at home. They can tell you that others besides Penelope Devereux, are busy clearing the way to the throne for the coming Ulysses."

There was dead silence for a minute. Scrope seemed too much stupified by what he had just heard, to make any reply.

"You do not answer me," said Sir Robert, at length, "nor is it necessary. But, you now see why I told you that you would not dare to tell tales. Whatever might be my fate, if all were known, your head would roll upon the scaffold to-morrow."

"No, no—friend Bowes," said his companion, with a haughty smile, for his strong will had recalled his self-possession, "in that, you deceive

yourself. The offences might be equal, but not so would be the punishment. My mother was a Howard—my wife's grand-mother, a Boleyn. We belong to the tribe of Dan, as "the Gypsy" used to say. *Noli me tangere* is our motto; and no one dare meddle with us."

"Lord Leicester's adage might be correct, when he spoke of himself, or such as himself, for the daughter of the Tudors loves not that a subject should lay hand upon her kindred; but when her own interests are at stake, the royal tigress respects the ties, neither of parentage, nor of affection. Your mother was a Howard, you say. Did his Howard's blood, a few years back, keep Norfolk from the scaffold? Your wife is, by descent, a Boleyn; why, so is Essex. But mark my words, Scrope. The cousinship will not save him: and if the old woman at Richmond, knew the secret that I could tell her, it would not save you."

There was silence for some minutes, as if the Warden had found the argument unanswerable. He resumed the conversation, at length, but in a tone of quiet sarcasm.

"You have good intelligencers, Bowes?"

"Men in my trade need them," was the careless reply. "You *preux chevaliers*, who have harness on back and sword at side, can answer an argument with a blow, and require them not."

"Yet, occasionally," said Scrope, with a smile, "even we employ their agency. I myself have scouts on the north of the Border, as well as on the south, and am sometimes indifferently well served."

"Indeed! and of late have ye heard ought of interest?"

"Yes—something from the Court of King Solomon."

"You mean King James."

"I mean what I say, King Solomon—for is he not wise beyond man's wisdom; and, moreover, the son of David—the fiddler."

"Nay—peace to Rizzio and his Manes. What of the Court?"

"It is reported me, that one of the maidens of the Queen of Scots, is a gem of beauty."

"Then it is neither Ann Kroas nor Katrine Skinkel, for they are both ugly enough to suggest that the practice of one of the cardinal virtues, at least, must be a pleasure as well as a duty."

"No, it was neither of these."

"The Lady Beatrice Ruthven probably?"

"Nay, nor she either. The sister of Lord Gowrie may be as stately as the Queen of Heaven, but I spoke of one, who is said to be as beautiful as the Queen of love. There is a fourth maiden—is there not?"

"Yes."

"How call you her?"

"Mistress Mary Ker."

"The sister of the Baron of Cessford—Sir Robert Ker, the Scotch Warden of the East Marches?"

"The same."

"By my honour, the girl has gentle blood in her veins, and they tell me, that her beauty is equal to her breeding."

"Possibly enough. I noted it not."

"Possibly enough — you noted it not," repeated Scrope, in a sarcastic tone. "How could you note it? Love is blind they say, and my scouts inform me, that my venerable friend, the Ambassador of England, is in the last stage of the distemper."

Sir Robert, in spite of himself, coloured from temple to chin.

"I deemed you too shrewd, Scrope," said he, "to have believed in such folly."

"I deemed you too shrewd, Bowes, to have yielded to it. But of the fact, there is no question. Why man, I have it on sure evidence, that you follow her with your eyes—flatter her with your lips—watch her movements —waylay her steps—wear rosettes on your shoes—have yellow starch in your ruff—put red ribands on your sword knot, and, like old Queen Bess, were caught practising the last steps of the Coranto before a Venice mirror."

And the Warden laughed long and loudly, at his own description.

Bowes said nothing, but sat on his chair

flushed with passion; while from time to time, his fierce black eyes glanced at his companion in a manner, that intimated distinctly enough he could have assassinated him on the spot.

"But you say nothing," said Lord Scrope, pacing rapidly up and down the room. "You need say nothing. Courage such as yours requires no eloquence to blazon it. Talk of 'the day of Cadiz,' indeed, talk of men driving the Dons from their bastions, at the point of the rapier; why what is that to an old fellow of fifty-five assaulting the heart of a wench, that half the young gallants of the Court are wild after. There's my Brother Warden, on the other side of the Border, Scott of Buccleugh, but six months back from France, as handsome a young fellow, as ever trod in a Spanish leather boot, and ruffling in silks and velvets, as if all the fashioners in Milan had been employed in setting him forth, and they tell me, the wench will not look at him. And after all, you to

assail her! Bravo, my old friend;" and he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. "And they call you wise Bowes. They say you are one of the Sages of the earth. It's too absurd," continued he, as he walked round and round, his companion. "Here's a proper votary of Cupid. Here's a hopeful Candidate, for Matrimony! Wizened cheeks, and a bag of bones in a jerkin; and shrivelled hams, and shrunk hose, stuffed out with bran, to conceal the broomsticks inside. It's excellent—it's too excellent." And seizing the unfortunate Ambassador by the shoulder, Lord Scrope dragged him from his chair, and kept twisting him backwards and forwards, as if to assist in the examination.

It is not to be supposed, that the fierce tempered Baron of Streatlam, had listened to this catalogue of excellences with composure. On the contrary, the crimson on his face, from moment to moment assumed a deeper and deeper hue, while from time to time his eyes flashed lightning, his lips worked spasmodically,

and his fingers played unconsciously with the handle of his dagger. So long, however, as Scrope, had limited his sarcasm to language, he continued to control himself, but when he was dragged from his seat to be surveyed at greater leisure, by the Lord Warden, he could forbear no longer; and mad with anger, he suddenly drew the poignard from his girdle, and with an arm, to which the passion of the moment had lent force, he drove it right against the breast of Lord Scrope.

The result, however, was not what he anticipated. The highly tempered Spanish blade, as if it had met some formidable resistance, snapped in two in his hand, and the Warden, instead of betraying either anger, or alarm, threw himself on a bench, and burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"Ha! ha! my friend Bowes," said he, as soon as the power of articulation returned to him. "Sit ye down, and let us be friends again. I have had my blow—you, yours.

By my honour, man, for one of your age and size, you strike right lustily. But for this shirt of Milan mail, I should have been fairly sped. You forgot, though, that I had some rough neighbours, and that I ever wear beneath my pourpoint, a doublet of proof. Recollect you not what two of your men from the Bishopric, Heron and Starked, did for the Scotch Warden, Ker of Cessford? Do you not remember too, for it happened in your time, when Elliott of Park nearly did to the death the other Warden, my Lord of Bothwell. The more by token, the soft-hearted Queen rode sixty miles in a day, to see the sick man at the Castle of Hermitage. I am wise, my friend; wiser than most of those who read the Proverbs of Solomon, for I profit by the experience of others. So shake hands on't—and let us forgive and forget."

With the words he left his seat, and approaching the angry diplomatist, pressed with the grip of a giant, the somewhat unwillingly conceded fingers.

"But who comes here," continued he. "By my life, the knave need have good warrant for his clatter, for he knocks loudly."

And he proceeded to the door, on the outside of which some one was rapping with unwearied energy.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW LISTENERS HEAR NO GOOD OF THEMSELVES.

Lord Scrope flung the door open. Without was an elderly man in a coarse dress of Lincoln green.

"What in the foul fiend's name, Sim," said the Warden, "are ye making all this noise about? And what lack ye? What seek ye here? Why have you left the Lodge?"

"I humbly beg your Lordship's pardon," was the reply, "but I have something of moment for your Lordship's ear."

"And what is it?"

The old man looked around him, as if to satisfy himself that the host and his wife were not

within ear shot, and then in a low tone, whispered the words, "Kinmont Willie."

"Ha!" said the Warden, in an excited tone, "what of him?"

"He is over the Border."

"Say ye so, indeed! Nay then, stop here for an instant," and Lord Scrope hurriedly returned to his companion within.

"Bowes," said he, "you do not know my forester by sight?"

"Not I."

"Do you fear his recognizing you?"

"Not a bit. Till to-day, I never was here in my life."

"Then may I have him in? for he has something to tell which interests me."

"By all means. And commune with him as you will. He is, no doubt, one of those intelligencers of whom you boast so much. I should like to see a specimen."

Lord Scrope answered with a smile, and retracing his steps to the exterior, bade the forester enter.

"Now, Sim," said the Warden eagerly, as

soon as the closing of the door, had prevented all risk of the communication being overheard. "Open your budget."

"Why you must know, my Lord, that last night, Ralph Featherstonehaugh chanced to be out on the Waste of Bewcastle, when he came upon a man suddenly. It was dark enough, for the moon is but young. But Ralph is like a cat, and can see as well at midnight as at mid-day."

"Never mind Ralph's power of vision, Sim. Who was the man?"

"Kinmont Willie, my Lord. Ralph knew him at once. However, he pretended as if he knew him not, and so gave him good-night, and passed on."

"And why in the name of the foul fiend, if Ralph knew the rascal, did he not seize him?"

"I doubt, my Lord," said the Forester, with a queer smile, "if there's a man in your Wardenry, forbye your Lordship's self, could do that singly; and I know that there are few would like to try. But Ralph did what he could; he rode to the next ford, and warned the watchmen. So they turned three or four of the lads out of bed, and got the

nags up, and as soon as it was daylight they put the hound in leash. Ralph guided them to the spot, and there was no difficulty about it, for the dog took up the scent at once."

"But are ye sure they were taking after the right man?"

"No doubt of that, my Lord, for at two or three burn-sides, the print of the horse's feet was quite distinct in the sand; and they knew from there being but three nails on the inside of the shoe, that it was made by old Wat Bell, of Canonby."

"Well man, what was the upshot? Did they run the fox to earth?"

"No, my Lord. At first the scent lay strong, and the hound ran without fault till they came to the Irthing, but there they lost the track."

"Pooh! they must have known little of wood-craft. He had but crossed the water!"

"Ay—so they thought—but though they cast up and down on both sides, the hound never challenged once, and so as daylight was failing them, they came to me to rest themselves and the hound. They are now at the farm-house,

near the Lodge, and as I thought that your Lordship might wish to hear of the matter, I came over to tell you."

"You did well, Sim, and as this is a matter that I must see into, I'll go back with you myself, and that instantly."

"I fear it's not possible, my Lord. It's ill finding one's way in the forest after sun-down. The night is as dark as pitch, and I lost the track coming here, and but that the river pulled me up, and that I knew I should find Tom Dixon's house upon its banks, I should not have made out the place these four hours."

"And must I stay here till the sun be up."

"No, my Lord; the moon will rise at midnight, and then, if your Lordship so pleases it, I can guide you to the Lodge."

"Be it so then. As soon as the moon rises we will start. So off with you to Tom Dixon's kitchen, and remember, keep this matter to yourself, for," added he, in a meaning tone, "this Kinmont Willie has escaped me so often—that I begin to think he has as many scouts about Carlisle as the Warden."

"Ye need not fear me, my Lord. Tom and Dame Dixon are both curious enough, but I have said nothing, and will say nothing. I should warn you, though, that if your Lordship wish to do anything with the Scotch reiver, your lads will need to catch the weazel sleeping, for Ralph Featherstonehaugh swears that Willie was riding the red mare, and if he be once upon her back, there is nothing on this side Tyne will touch him."

The old man left the room as he spoke, and Lord Scrope and Bowes were once more alone.

"Well," said the former, "did you hear?"

"I heard."

"Is it not sufficient to drive a man crazy."

"He must needs go mad then upon small compulsion. What! The Viceroy of the North, lose his wits, because he learns that his vice-royalty has been entered by a common thief!"

"Ay, but it is because he is not a common thief, that I am like to lose my wits. I tell you the fellow is a master of the craft."

"Why what age is he."

"Scarce twenty."

"Nay then, he's not worth speaking about. To excel in any profession, requires experience."

"Pooh—pooh—you count the extent of his knowledge by his years. But it is acts, and not years that make men skilful, and I believe that the young rascal began his career of chivalry as soon as he left his mother's apron string."

"My good friend, be serious."

"I am so. At thirteen, this Willy Armstrong of Kinmont, or Kinmont Willie as they call him, held his father's horse at the Lockerby-lick; when the Johnstones and Buccleugh's spearmen cut off the Maxwells to a man. At fifteen, he did the same good office for Bothwell, when he frightened King Jamie out of his wits, at Falkland: and there has hardly been a conspiracy against the Throne, or a skirmish on the other side of the Border, for the last six years, but this young imp of Satan has contrived to have a finger in it."

"All true enough, no doubt, but what have you to do with that? If every bonny Scot from

the Mull of Cantyre to St. Abb's, chose to cut each other's throats, what is it to you ?"

"Nothing. Had this young imitator of the Cid confined himself to the cracking of the skulls of his fellow-countrymen, I should not have troubled myself about the matter."

"But he has not been satisfied with displaying his talents at home?"

"No."

"And looking upon you Cumberland folk to be *in partibus infidelium*, like his prototype, he took to levying contributions on the heathen ?"

"True to the letter. There is scarce a man within twenty miles of the Scottish Border, whom he has not plundered."

"Not certainly the Lord Warden ?"

"Faith," said Lord Scrope, laughing, "no less a man. It was but last year, that the Bishop sent me some prime Durham heifers. To ensure their safety, I fed them on the Socories—the meadows, you know, below the Castle walls. Will you believe me, when I tell you that this Scotch kite stooped one night on

the quarry, and carried off everything in his clutch!"

"What? under your very nose?"

"I tell you man they were feeding within half a bow shot of the bastions."

"Bravo!" said Bowes, as he clapped his hands lustily? "Bravo I say again. I respect the fellow for his pluck. But I suppose, after such a tornado, you had calm weather for a twelvemonth, at least. You have seen nothing of him since?"

"Quite a mistake. Scarce six weeks from the time of the adventure of the heifers, there was a fair in Carlisle. The young fellow, it seems, likes juncketing, and nothing would serve him, but he must honour our festivities with a visit. He chanced, however, to be recognised, and I was made acquainted with his presence."

"You lost, of course, no time in paying your respects to one so welcome?"

"Not a moment. We have always a dozen spearmen at the Castle ready to put foot in stirrup; so I sent one off at speed, with orders

to close the great gate at the far end of the main bridge. I watched its shutting myself from the top of the Donjon tower, and then mounted my horse, and proceeded with my lads to the Market place. Young Armstrong had taken up his quarters at a hostelry there, and I thought it would be a satisfaction to see the fellow seized with my own eyes."

"And you saw him?"

"Of course I did. I was as close to him as I am to you."

"And you seized him too, no doubt?"

"Not a bit of it."

"What! missed him again?"

"Faith, it's true. Some jade or other, (for the scoundrel is very handsome, and all the girls are running after him,) had given him warning, and just as I and my lads had reached the door of the hostelry, and were making enquiries for our distinguished guest, who should ride out of a side passage which led from its back court, but Kinmont Willie himself. We were between him and the Scotch gate, and I called to the men to draw up across the Market place and stop him.

"And what did the young fellow? For to tell ye the truth, Scrope, in spite of the episode of the Bishop's cattle, I am interested for him."

"What did he, do you ask? Looked at us for a minute as coolly as if he had been inspecting us upon parade, and then struck his mare with the spur, and was off like a flash of lightning towards the Botcher Gate."

"And unopposed?"

"Of course. Who the devil could have expected his taking southward. However we all set after him—but it was no use. He was riding that big chesnut that the forester spoke of. She was a present from Bothwell when the Earl went beyond seas. Folks say that she came from the Levant, and that her sire was a horse of the Grand Turk."

"Well! well! what followed?"

"As soon as he got through the gate, he turned short to the left, and took along the drover's lane."

"The bye-road which runs outside the town-wall, and connects the south gate with the bridges?"

"Precisely. He traversed it at speed, and we followed close at his heels. Well, he made the river. It divides, as you know, near the town into two branches, separated by a low sandy island, scarcely above ordinary water level. On the town side, the stream you may recollect is narrow enough, but the main river is to the north. The Eden chanced to be in high flood, and had not only filled its two water courses, and covered deep the sandy flat, but had almost risen to the height of the raised causeway, which connected them."

"Never mind the river, Scrope; tell me of this scapegrace of yours. Tell me of Willie."

"The fellow gained the South bridge, and went at speed along the causeway; but he had been so busy keeping a look out on those behind him, that he did not observe, till he was within a hundred yards of it, that the gate at the far end of the North bridge was closed."

"You had the rat in the trap at last."

"So I thought. In front was bolt and bar;

behind were I and my spearmen, while on either side rolled the river like a sea,"

"And what did the fellow?"

"For a moment he reined the chesnut up, and turned her head. I thought he would have charged us, and down went our lances to bar the way. I suspect he saw it was of no use, for once more he wheeled the mare round, but instead of making for the gate, he struck her fiercely with the spur, and rode her at the parapet."

"And did she face it?"

"By heavens," said Scrope, springing from his seat, in the enthusiasm of the moment, and walking about the room, "that chesnut is worth her weight in gold. She neither baulked, nor swerved, but faced it gallantly."

"And horse and man, went clean over."

"Even so."

"And what did you do?"

"Nothing, but look on; for the water was so heavy, I thought that my work had been done for me. But no! When they came first up—for you may suppose that they had gone

clean under; both seemed a little stupified, but in a minute they recovered themselves, and then made steadily for the north bank."

"And did you not try to pick up the fellow, as he came out of the water."

"Yes. But that dolt of a Bridgeward was so long in unlocking gate, and drawing bolt and bar, that Willie had made the land, and by the time that we had got the road cleared, he was some twenty yards ahead of us. We tried a burst for a quarter of a mile, but it was of no use. By the time we reached the top of the hill, every horse was blown, and I had nothing left for it, but to tell the men to pull up."

"And where was the chesnut?"

"Just ahead—going at half-speed, not a hair turned, and as right in the wind as if she had been merely taking a canter for exercise."

"And what did Willie?"

"The fellow stopped when we did, and turning the mare round, said in his infernal Scotch Shibboleth—

"My Lord Scrope, I bid you good morning.

Yet ere I go, I would give you a counsel, and make of you a request."

"And what are they, you scoundrel," roared I, for I was in a tremendous passion.

"The counsel is, that if you want to catch Willie Armstrong, you must get yourself and your lads better mounted."

"Well," said Bowes, laughing, "the advice was a good one. Now for the request."

"Ah, that was equally modest. It was, that if I wished to do a kind and Christian act for a young fellow, who was dependant upon his own exertions for his bread, I would take care by the next full moon, to have a fresh lot of heifers feeding in the Castle meadows."

"So that was the last you saw of him?"

"Yes: Master Willie a second time bids me good day, and canters off, leaving me and my troopers to recover our horses' wind at leisure, and to return to Carlisle, to be the laughing stock of every old woman in the Wardenry."

"And cannot you get him delivered up to you by the Scotch Wardens?"

"No; the rascal has good friends. Besides,

through his grandmother, Euphame Cranstown —I should say Lady Kinmont, for you know, with our beggarly neighbours, every cabbage garden gives to the female, as to the male heads of the family a territorial designation— he is a far kinsman of Cessford's, and more than all, he is the foster brother of your lady love, the fair mistress Mary Ker. Sir Robert is Warden of the East Marches, and will not stir him for his sister's sake. The Warden of the West Marches—Buccleugh, is like yourself, the fair lady's suitor, and for that reason treats tenderly her kinsman. No! If I ever have him in the stone room at Carlisle, it must be by the exertions of my own people."

"Well. You have heard of him to-night. What do you intend doing now?"

"That I have already decided on. As soon as the moon rises, I am off to the Forest-lodge. I left there, my lad with the horses. I will send off immediately the varlet to the Captain of Bewcastle, with orders to turn out every spearman in hold. I will myself return to

Carlisle, and two hours before daylight, there will be a hundred Border prickers in the saddle."

"Well intended: but you have not the time."

"Yes. I may tell you in confidence, that the horses at the Lodge are the grey barb, which I had brought all the way from Spain, and the brown colt, that Queen Bess gave my brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cary. They are the best nags in the Wardenry. Kinmont Willie would give his ears to know that they were stabled to-night beyond the Castle walls. So my messenger and I will not be long in covering our ground, and I repeat that by day-break, we shall have in a net, all the country from Allstone to Solway."

"Allstone!" muttered Bowes to himself, as if the words suggested some indistinct memories. "Ha! now I recollect. Do you know, Scrope, that I too have had my adventures? I met this morning, with a stranger—a sort of Kinmont Willie, in his way."

"Why you do not mean to say," said Lord

Scrope, with a scream of laughter, "that you have lost your nag."

"No, but I would rather have lost every horse in my stable ten times over, than have a fellow going loose, who knows so much of my private affairs as the man I speak of."

"Did he recognize you?"

"Worse than that. He told me distinctly, that I was out without the Queen's leave—that Essex was sure to lose his head—and that my friendship for him might not improbably cost me mine—that I had been down at Streatlam, and had gone there for the purpose of—" and Bowes paused suddenly, and then added in a flurried tone. "In short, I do not recollect all he said, but I recollect enough to know that he has picked up too much for my safety."

"Ha! ha! friend Robin," said Scrope, with a laugh, "men get into danger when they engage in conspiracies."

"Or," said Bowes, drily, "promise to deliver blue rings."

"No more of that, Robin," said the Warden, good-naturedly, "no more of that, an' thou

lovest me. But I can understand a nod or wink as well as any one, and I see what you are driving at. When I make that haul of my net to-night, you think I may as easily catch two fish as one?"

Bowes nodded.

"Well, I'll be neighbourly." But continued he, pulling out his tablets, "I must know distinctly, the sort of fellow you want. How is he accompanied."

"By a thick made elderly man. He might be yeoman—merchant—or smuggler."

"Or all three?"

"Possibly enough!"

"Now as to your friend himself. How do you describe him?"

"About eight and twenty, tall, fair, pale, in a black doublet, with a broad brim Spanish hat."

"That will never do, man. The description will fit a thousand. Have you nothing of special note?"

"Yes. Now I think of it, he had no beard; only a tuft on the under lip, and wore Venice hose."

"Ha! that last is worth all the rest. Venice hose in Cumberland! *Ventre bleu!* There's coxcombry for you! I doubt if you would find another pair in the Wardenry. And where said he, that he was going."

"To Allstone. But that goes for nothing. I told him I was bound to Carlisle."

"And you are here. Why Tom Dixon's is exactly half way between the two. So if your friend has calculated his distance as accurately as you have, he may be here too."

"Be where he may, I should like to have my hand on him."

"I have no doubt of that. Well, the cast I am going to make to night, is a pretty large one, and I guess we shall find many stray fish in the meshes, and probably, your acquaintance among the number."

"I hope so, for I have questions to ask of him."

"And I will guarantee that he answers them. In such matters, there is nothing like a little of the "*peine forte et dure.*" There is a screw in the dungeons of my poor Castle at Carlisle,

which hath been found ere now, a wonderful persuader to confidential communications. But I must see what Tom Dixon has got us for supper, for I must be off to the Forest Lodge, by the first blink of moonlight."

And the Lord Warden left the room, and proceeded to the kitchen, to make enquiries with regard to the contents of his host's larder.

CHAPTER IX.

TIT FOR TAT.

We must return to our friends in the secret chamber. It may be easily imagined that their feelings were not altogether pleasurable ones. The den had been well formed for observation, and through the openings of the wood work of the St. Catherine's wheel ornament, they had seen and heard everything that had passed.

The earlier part of the interview, indeed, between Bowes and Lord Scrope had excited little attention. To the moss-trooper, the larger portion of it was, in fact, unintelligible; and the Italian, though he had immediately recognised in Sir

Robert, his companion of the morning, yet apparently had gathered nothing from the conversation that ensued, between him and the Warden, that attracted especial notice. From time to time, indeed, as each laid bare the secret policy or plottings of his companion, he gave a slight nod or faint smile, as if he had been communing with himself, and applauding his own sagacity. But beyond that, there was no evidence of passion or interest.

The violent rapping at the outer door, however, and the announcement of the forester below, had the effect of arousing both him and Willie from their apathy, and their anxiety was not diminished by the opening of the secret panel, and the entrance of Tom Dixon himself.

"Be off with ye lads," said he hurriedly. "Make a start of it, and on the instant, for there's something in the wind, or old Sim would not have come over on a night like this, and insisted on seeing the Warden himself."

"I'll no budge a fit, Tam," said Willie, "till I hear what that forester chield has got to say. It concerns our safety to ken if there be a trap

laid for us—so I'll see the end o't. And mind ye, Tam, they will nae doubt be asking for something to eat and drink ; for thae pock-puddings are never content, except when they are at the maut and the broo. Sae mak the auld carle help ye to carry in the dishes : it will keep him frae prowling about the doors, and seeing mair than he should see. And mind ye dinna come back again. Your absence may be noted, but ye may take it for granted, when plates are clattering and mugs filling, and yoursel' making a' the din that in dacency ye can, that my freend and me are aff. But there comes auld Sim—sae awa wi ye."

In fact, at that moment, Lord Scrope having obtained of Bowes, permission for his introduction, was bringing in the forester below, and the inn-keeper having retired, the occupants of the secret chamber prepared to give an anxious attention to his communication.

It can well be understood with what breathless interest it was listened to. As Lord Scrope proceeded to narrate the prowesses of Kinmont Willie, the hero of the adventure gave from

time to time a low chuckling laugh, but when Bowes added the narrative of his rencontre with the traveller of the morning, and the description of his person, the Borderer could no longer contain himself, but seizing the arm of the Italian, whispered in his ear.

"I'm the tae man—are ye the tither?"

The Italian replied by a squeeze of the hand.

"I jealoused as much. That wizened auld creature there with the beard, that looks sae like a starved rotten, is no that ill at a description. I kenned ye at ance." And, having thus given vent to his admiration of his own sagacity, he lent his attention once more to the conversation below.

At length, as he had foreseen, a demand was made for supper. Tom Dixon, whose hopes and fears had apparently anticipated such a termination to the day's work, soon after entered, followed by the forester with the substantial viands, which the taste of the age required. In a few minutes, the board was spread, a round of cold boiled beef graced its surface, and the guests placed themselves at

table. Loud was the laughter of the Border Baron, great was the clatter of knives and forks, frequent the pouring forth of strong ale.

It was at this moment, when everything below announced the attention of the noble guests and their domestics, to be fully occupied, that the moss-trooper gently closed the shutter which separated them from the carved wood-work, and having thus prevented all possibility of any movements in the secret chamber being heard beyond it, he whispered to his companion.

"Now, Sir Traveller, it's time to be aff."

With the words, he gently opened the low wooden door which opened on the roof at the back of the house.

"The wa' 's but ten feet high," said he, "just a naething—sae gang ye first, for I maun stay ahint and close the bole. There's a trick in't. And gie me your petronel and your saddle bags; I'll hand them to ye when down."

The Italian obeyed orders. On hands and knees he made his way to the edge of the low stone work, and thence dropped to the ground.

In a minute after, the moss-trooper was by

his side, and without uttering a word, took him by the wrist and led him into the forest.

For the first two hundred yards, the ground rose a little, then for a while the surface became level, and then it slowly descended. They might have moved for a quarter of a mile, when the Italian became conscious that he was in the neighbourhood of a low building.

"It's the byre," whispered Willie, "ye'll find the naigs here. But stay ye outside, and I'll bring the colt to ye. My mear, Meg, is no that chancy, and does na like ony ane to sort her but mysel'. If ye got ower near her heels in the dark, she might knock your harns out."

So saying, he entered the cow-house, and shortly after, returned with the horse of the Italian.

"I hae left the headstall on," whispered he, "it's under the bridle—ye'll find the halter whisped round his neck. A bit o' rope's handy at an orra time. I never carry less than ten yards o't mysel. And I hae put a surcingle

o' Tam Dixon's ower the saddle. If it come to a burst, it'll no do to be dependin only on anes' girths. So get ye the valise richt, and I'll hae the mear out in a jiffey."

The Signor Octavio had scarcely fastened his last buckle, when the moss-trooper was once more by his side. He whispered the order to mount, and the travellers putting foot in stirrup, started on their journey.

The night was pitch dark. There was no wind—but a thick misty atmosphere, that seemed to speak of coming rain, hung over the sky and shut out the starlight. The density of the forest added to the gloom. Occasionally, indeed, there were patches of open ground interspersed here and there at rare intervals, with a solitary oak or beech; but the wood for the most part was thick, and the branches low, so as to make travelling, not only slow, but dangerous. Often did the pendulous twigs which marked the extremity of some upper bough, sweep their head and shoulders; and ever and anon, some more potent limb would

stretch itself forth horizontally from the parent stem, and bar by its sudden apparition their way.

"The de'il tak the trees," said Willie, as from one of these he received a smart blow on the forehead, "I never could guess what they were created for. They are fit for naething but to mak wuddies o'. Thanks be to gracious—we are no pestered wi' many o' them North o' the Border. Eh! that's the grand country! There's naething aboon the earth, but the air of Heaven, and a lad can let his naig gae free for twenty miles thegither, with fient a thing to stop him, but a bit moss or a well-head."

"And when," said the Italian, "do we get into that Paradise of bare moors and open heath."

"As soon as we are north of the Irthing, on the waste of Bewcastle. There's nae trees there, and as it's no aboon twenty mile frae the Border, and as in course I hae harried it a hundred times, I could ride every moss o't as well by midnight as by midday. But we Border

lads are no' that fond o' coming further South, excep' when, as upon the present occasion, we canna help ourselves; for in course we maun a' ride when my Lord orders. But, to say the truth, I never feel myself a'thegither at hame down hereabouts, where ye have bushes and trees, and a' sorts of uglinesses."

"Yet you seem to find your way indifferently well through them."

"Me find my way! It's Meg—no me."

"And who is Meg?"

"The mear to be sure—the mear I'm riding."

"She find her way! How the deuce can she know where we are going?"

"She may no ken whar you're ganging, but she kens brawly whar she's ganging hersel'. She has got a foal at hame, and she is making strait for her ain stable door."

"I am glad we are like to arrive at it with such certainty."

"Wi' regard to the certainty, I'll no say muckle. If Lord Scrope get his horses, and gar fire the Beacon at Brampton, I'm fearing

we'el hae fash eneugh to get through; for afore the tar-barrel has been alowe five minutes, it will hae warned the country."

"And what would happen then?"

"Why, auld Nixon the Captain of Bewcastle sleeps in harness, and he'll be out with a dozen of his prickers, and they're unchancy fellows to meet, when the grund is saft under foot."

"But my horse is first rate, and so is the mare."

"Ay, on firm ground we might laugh at them; but amid mosses and peat hags, and burn heads, the hobylers hae ay the best o't. Their naigs, mark ye, hae been born and bred amang the moors, and I verily believe the brutes can tell by the smell, whether the grund will carry them or no."

"And what do you purpose doing?"

"We maun hinder Lord Scrope warning the country."

"And how is that to be done?"

"By turning his twa horse loose."

"It is not possible. Did you not hear that

the watchman and four or five Spears were at the lodge?"

"Na, na; they're at the Farm house, a quarter of a mile lower down the burn. It's no like there are ony at the Lodge but my Lord's groom, and may be a falconer."

"And how on a night so dark as this, will you make your way to a solitary hut in the forest? Why, my good fellow, I can't see five yards off."

"Nae matter for that. I sighted the Lodge as I cam up this morning, and the mear will cover her ain tracks ganging back."

"But my good friend, you did not ride over the house, or through the house, and unless you did one or the other, I don't see how you are to see it."

"Hout, man! There'll be a light burning, and ye'll see that. But did ye never hear that my Lord has ay a candle or a lamp in his private stable. He's main proud of his naigs, and for good reason; they are a' fra' Barbary or Spain, or from some place or other ayont the sea, and o' great price. And so they keep a light burning, lest the yauds get their leg

ower the halter, or some mischance befa' them. Mair by token, for the same reason, ane of the groom lads ever sleeps in the stable. And ye see, I'm right as to the Lodge, and light baith. Look ahead—what's yon?"

"A glimmer among the trees."

"Just that. That light comes either frae the Lodge, or its stable. Sae bear awa a wee bit to the left. We maun get nearer 't."

The Italian did as he was directed, and the two horsemen made towards the light. As they approached it, they crossed a small brook, a tributary of the little river, on which stood Tom Dixon's hostelry. As soon as they had crossed it, the moss-trooper pulled up beside a magnificent tree, which stood on a little flat in its further bank."

"Ye may put fit to grund, Sir Traveller," said he, "for ye'll hae to bide here a bit, and it's as weel to ease the colt. And now listen to me, and listen weel—for, it may be, life depends upon the words. I maun try this job alane. Ower mony grieves hinders wark. Wait for me here half an hour; if I come na,

and ye hear a lang whistle, get to the saddle at ance. It will be a signal that they are ower mony for me."

"And how in the name of Heaven," said the Italian, "am I to find my way in this accursed forest, when it is so dark that I can scarcely see my horse's head."

"Oh, it's no sae difficult as ye think; especially as ye wunna be followed. For the chields will be sae busy wi' me, that they'll hae nae time to think o' ony body else."

"And what am I to do?"

"Div ye hear the burn there," pointing to the little stream, the murmur of whose waters in the stillness of the night came softly on the ear.

"Do you mean the brook that we have just crossed?"

"Ou ay, burn or brook, it's a' the same thing. Weel, when ye mount, keep up the side o't. It runs east and wast, and rises in the moorland, three mile higher up. Ye'll follow it easy, for it's strong eneugh to drive a mill, and makes near as muckle din as the clappers. That'll take ye about an hour."

"So far I understand; and supposing that I am at its source, what am I to do then?"

"Loose the halter from the naig's neck, tie him to a bush, and wait till the moon rise."

"You said she would be up at midnight."

"Just that; sae ye'll no hae to bide there lang. As soon as she's half an hour high in the lift, into the saddle wi' ye again. And now attend to what I've got to say?"

"'Had I a thousand ears I'd hear thee,' as your namesake says," said the Italian laughing.

"I hae nae namesake that I ken o', with a thousand ears," replied the somewhat astonished Borderer. "But if ye use your ain twa weel, there'll be eneugh for the purpose. So tak tent to what I say. For the first hour keep the glimmer o' the moon on your right cheek-bane—that'll clear the head of the big moss. For the niest hour keep the moonlight direck on the braid side o' your cheek—that suld bring ye to the Irthing. As sune as ye hae crossed the water, keep the light on the spaul o' your right shouther. Three hours riding suld then tak you into Scotland; for the Waste of Bewcastle,

as I said, has nae trees—and it will be light eneugh. The ground, too, is no to complain o'. Sae ye'll be able to gie the colt his head and mak play. Div ye understand me?"

The Italian repeated accurately the instructions.

The young Borderer listened with admiration.

"My certie, lad, ye wad mak a grand schollard. The single-carritch wad be naething to ye—and that's a thing, that for a' the skelpin I gat when a bairn, frae granny and the Dominie baith, I never could win ower yet. But I maun be aff! And noo, mind—if ye hear me whistle, ride for't."

And, leading the mare by the head, the mosstrooper and his steed disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER X.

THE BARB AND THE BROWN COLT.

We must follow Kinmont Willie.

On quitting the Italian, he advanced cautiously towards the Lodge, leading his mare by the bridle. On arriving, however, within a hundred yards of the building, he apparently did not consider it safe to bring the animal within a closer proximity, and tied her to a tree. Having done so, he threw off a rough horseman's cloak, and folding it leisurely, attached it to the pummel of his saddle. He next passed his hand into his belt, and having ascertained that pistols and dagger were in their place, he turned to the mare.

"Now, Meg," said he, addressing her as if she had been a human being. "Be a good lass, and be quiet—I'll be back in a jiffey."

He patted, as he spoke, the animal on the neck, and taking her head gently between his hands, kissed her forehead. The intelligent creature seemed to comprehend the words, or the caress which accompanied them, for she rubbed her nose against her master's hand; and though, when he moved off, she followed him till lost to sight, with an anxious eye, she stirred not, but turning after a while her head towards the tree, awaited, with the manner of one to whom such scenes were familiar, his return.

Willie, in the meantime, approached the Lodge. As he got nearer, he became aware that the light came not from the main building itself, but from the stable which stood near it.

"It's just as I guessed," said he. "The forester's varlet has gone down to the farm, to hae a clash wi' the lads frae the Ford. I'll find nane but the Warden's groom at the stable."

Towards this, accordingly, he bent his steps, treading on tip-toe. Ever and anon, too, he

stopped, and bending cautiously round, stood with lowered head and anxious ear, as if listening. There was nothing to be heard, however, but the steady bite of the horses within, as they champed their food. Willie approached the window. The small wooden shutter that fastened it had fortunately been left open, probably, for the sake of air, and gazing through the aperture, the moss-trooper had no difficulty in making himself acquainted with the interior.

The stable was small, and lighted by a horn lantern suspended from the roof. In the stalls stood two horses, a grey and a brown, while at the other end, stretched upon some sheaves of straw, lay a lad, in livery, asleep. Willie approached the door, and pulling the cord that was passed through it, gently raised the latch. The horses turned their heads at the sound, and then as if in the broad brimmed hat and buff jerkin that entered, they saw nothing to alarm them, resumed their feeding. Willie entered, and gently closed the door, having with stealthy steps approached the sleeping groom. He had nearly reached him, when the barb, whose finer

intelligence had probably remarked in the new comer no familiar face, gave a short snort, as if of alarm. The sound awakened the lad, and he opened his eyes. The stupor of his slumbers, for a moment, prevented him from ascertaining the strange features of the visitor. In another second, however, he seemed to be conscious that the intrusion was a hostile one, for he started hurriedly to his feet, as if he would have summoned assistance; but ere the words rose to his lips, Willie sprang forward and seized him by the throat, and under the gigantic force of the moss-trooper, the boy sank again upon the straw.

"Be quiet, ye young fule," said Willie, "I hae nae wish to skaith ye; but I tell ye frankly, that if ye speak word, good or bad, I'll draw my knife across your weazand. Ay, it's nae use," as the lad made some unavailing efforts to free himself. "When my hand's ance on a man's throat, it's no that easy shaking it aff. So be a good bairn, and naebody 'll harm ye. But for my ain sake ye ken I maun tak' my precautions."

As he spoke, he untied the handkerchief from

his neck, and introducing it into the boy's mouth, fastened it behind his head."

"Ye're dumb now, I guess," said he, "sae to make legs and arms safe."

With the words he removed a couple of halters from a peg in the wall. The one he passed round the lad's body, so as to pinion his arms to his side; with the other he tied his ankles together, though not without some efforts on the part of his victim to escape.

"There!" said he, at length. "I'm thinking ye'll do, and ye may be thankfu' my bonny man, that I hae used the tow and no the knife; but I'm no fond of tying St. Mary's knot on man or brute, except it be a case of needcessity. But to wark. They are bonny beasts," continued he, turning to the horses, and examining them with a critical eye, "and good right has the Warden to be proud o' them. But the brown's the naig for me. If it comes to heavy ground and hard riding, he should carry my weight the best of the twa. So I'll aff for the saddle—but before I gang, I maun gie another look at this young birkie."

Once more the moss-trooper tightened the knots of the gag and the ropes, and having done so, left the stable, and made his way back to the mare.

He found the animal standing patiently where he left her below the tree. The intelligent creature, seemed, however, to recognise his step, for she welcomed him with a low neigh.

"Whisht Meg, whisht my beauty," whispered he, "it'll no do to be nichering and skirling here, as if ye were on the haughs at Kinmont. But ye'll be there soon lass, and ye'll see your bonnie foal again, and I'm ganging to gie ye a companion on the road. And mind ye now, be genteel; and dinna kick his harns out, for ye ken lass, ye're whiles ower ready with your hinder legs."

While this monologue was going on, he had ungirthed the saddle, and removed the bridle from the mare's head. She still remained, however, fastened to the sapling by a short halter. The moss-trooper then uncoiled the

tether rope, that was twisted round her neck. Shaking it loose upon the ground, he once more passed the end of it round the mare's neck, and fastened it with a knot, but sufficiently low down upon the shoulder, to prevent a pull on it affecting her respiration. He next extended the cord along her back, and to prevent it changing its place, lashed it by some twine, which he took from his pocket, to the stump of the tail. This done, he placed himself behind her, and taking hold of the other end of the rope, gave a sudden and powerful jerk, as if to try the strength of the fastening. The mare swerved a little, but the neck-knot kept its hold.

"She'll do," muttered he. "And now comes the maist ticklish part of the business, for as soon as I get her head inside the stable, thae twa colts will make nichering eneugh to wake the dead. I'm feared the chields at the farm will be hearing it. However, the job's to be done, and the sooner it's done the better."

He replaced, as he spoke, the saddle on

the mare, though without girthing it, and with the bridle loose in his left hand, he untied the halter from the sapling, and led Meg to the stable.

The first glance at its interior, as he cautiously looked into it, filled him with dismay. The groom was gone. On the floor were strewed fragments of the ropes that bound him, and the handkerchief; and beside them, lay an open clasp-knife.

"I should ha'e riped his pouches," said Willie to himself, with an admonitory shake of the head, "but it's ower late to think o' that now—he'll be half way to the farm by this time. But it does na muckle matter. As I guessed! There gae the naigs, and they would hae brought the hornets on me, if there had been naething else to draw them out of their bink."

In fact, as the moss-trooper had foreseen, no sooner did Meg introduce her head within the stable door, than the horses commenced an emulous neighing, whose echoes pierced far

into the night and made further concealment hopeless.

Willie felt that there was no time to lose. Fastening the mare to a ring at the end of the stable, he put the saddle upon the brown horse's back, placed the bridle on his head, and having ascertained that the buckles of the girths and the surcingle were all right, led forth the caparisoned animal, and tied him to a post near the door.

"Come what like," muttered he to himself, "they canna prevent me gieing them a gallop for't."

With something like a smile of defiance on his lip, Willie returned to the stable, and, having brought the jennet from his stall, attached him by his halter to the tether rope near the mare's tail. Sufficient space, however, was left to enable the two animals to move freely, and especial care was taken, that the cord should be so short, that it could neither drag upon the ground, or descend low enough to get beneath the fore-legs of the led horse. Once

more Willie examined carefully the knotting—cut away with his dagger the superfluous pieces—passed a throat strap under the barb's neck, to prevent the head-stall being dragged over his ears—and having found that all was right, he untied the mare, and led her to the door. The horse, with the docility of his race, followed, and all three stood once more in the open air.

At that moment, a yell came upon the ear through the stillness of the night, and then shouts and cries from the neighbourhood of the farm-house.

"Ay, as I jealoused," muttered Willie to himself, "the stag has found the herd; but it's ower late. Meg, my dawtie," continued he turning to the mare, "get awa' hame. Yer foal's waiting for ye."

With the words, he pulled the halter from the chesnut's head and gave a loud shout. The mare had been standing motionless, but she seemed to comprehend the signal, for at once she sprang forward, as though she had

been struck with the spur, and galloped off, followed by the barb. A fresh shout added new vigour to her pace, and both dashed into the forest. For an instant, the clattering of their hoofs came upon the ear, but there was little echo from the turfy surface, and the sound soon died away.

For a couple of minutes, with bent head and contracted eye brow, the Borderer stood listening, and then with a satisfied air, he resumed his upright position.

"The auld lass," said he, "has ta'en the right airt for her ain stable, and the Warden may say good-bye to his gallant grey; but I maun think o' mysel', and trowth, it's time, for here comes the Hot Trod."

While yet speaking, he had turned in the direction of the farm-house, and there, scarce bigger than a star just above the horizon, was seen amid the trees, a small ball of fire. It seemed to move, however, and to approach, for it increased in size and brightness, while ever and anon from its neighbourhood, came the sound of distant voices.

For a minute, Willie gazed as if he would have ascertained accurately the distance of his pursuers. He then mounted his new steed. Once and again he struck him with the spur. The fiery animal plunged violently, but Willie sat firm as a rock: and as if he had satisfactorily ascertained the spirit of his horse, and the soundness of his girth-buckles, he moved off in the direction of his companion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOT TROD.

We must return to our friend the Italian. It may easily be imagined, that the half hour that he had passed alone, since the departure of his guide, had not been an agreeable one. What the precise intentions of the Borderer were, he did not know, but he knew this, that alone and unsupported he was about to turn adrift the two horses, by the aid of which, the Warden proposed sending orders for the capture of himself and his companion. The steeds, he had learned from the conversation of Lord Scrope, were of high price—nay, the best in his stable. Was it likely that they would be left

unprotected? and if protected, what was the number, or the means of defence of their guardians. Kinmont Willie might be captured, or even if merely wounded, might be disabled for the prosecution of his flight. The Italian sighed—for the bold bearing, and the frank manners of the lad; had awakened his sympathy, and the likings of sympathy are the work of a moment, and not of time.

From Willie, his thoughts reverted to himself. What was the especial danger that threatened him in England, he had not thought proper to communicate; but Andrew Barton, the master of the Deutsches Fräulein had intimated to the smuggler a suspicion, at least, that such danger existed, and that for his passenger to be found on English soil, might be fatal to him. Some such was probably the fact, for there was a shade of care on the brow of the Signor Octavio, and from time to time he stood with compressed lip, and anxious ear, as if awaiting a signal; or repeated to himself the instructions with which the moss-trooper had provided him, in the event of his own capture.

As the minutes passed on, and nothing broke the silence of the night, his anxiety increased. Then, after a while came upon his ear something like distant shouting, and then, at no great distance, the rapid pace of horses in the forest.

The Italian untied his steed, and sprang to the saddle, but the sounds, instead of approaching him, gradually died away.

"He has not whistled yet," muttered he to himself, "and I was to remain here till he did whistle. But they may have stifled his cries in the house, and I not have heard them. However, I promised to obey orders, and I will keep my word."

His confidence was rewarded. In a few minutes, a horse's step was heard amid the darkness, and ere he could ascertain whether the approaching party were friend or foe, the moss-trooper was by his side.

"We maun ride for't, Sir Traveller," said Willie's cheerful voice. "They hae put the hound in leash, and are upon the Hot Trod."

"And what is the Hot Trod?"

"Why ye see when they follow a man at

night, with the sleuth hound, they put a lighted peat on the tap o' their spears, and by March-law, ilka ane that sees it, under pain of forfeiture of gear and goods, is bound to mount and follow."

"But have you succeeded, Willie? Are Lord Scrope's horses adrift?"

"Ou ay—the horses are safe eneugh. But this is no a time for clashing. We maun ride for't, I tell ye." And Willie struck into the wood, followed by his companion.

Notwithstanding, however, their best efforts, their progress was slow. The night was pitch dark, and though the haugh, or flat by the burn side, was nearly free from timber, they had no sooner cleared it, than they found the travelling to the last degree difficult. The larger trees became more and more frequent, and the interstices between them, were not rarely blocked up with brushwood. Added to this, the low branches of the copse, or the over-hanging boughs of the greater timber, ever and anon swept head and shoulder, and added to the difficulty of their progress.

What was worst of all was, that Willie seemed occasionally uncertain about their course; for he turned, now right and now left, with the air of a man who is in a labyrinth, and has lost his way. After this fashion, they had moved on for half an hour, in silence. All at once, as they gained the top of a little knoll, the Italian saw before them two lights—one somewhat distant, and the other on the low ground to the left, and in their more immediate neighbourhood. He instantly rode up, and laying his hand upon his guide's arm, pointed them out to him. Willie reined in his horse, and for a minute contemplated them in silence.

"By a' the devils in hell," said he, at length, "we ha'e come back to the auld spot again. That light afore us is the lodge, and the other to the left and below, are the lads with the Hot Trod. Listen man, to the baying of the hound."

At that moment there came upon the ear, through the still night, the impatient chiding

of the blood hound, as he pressed forward in the track.

"And how is this, Willie?" said the Italian, in something like anger. "Did you not tell me, that if the night were as dark as pitch, the mare would find her way straight to her own stable?"

"I told you right."

"And yet she has brought you here!"

"*She* bring me here," said the moss-trooper, in an impetuous tone. "By this time, Meg is half way to the Irthing."

"Then what in the name of Heaven are you riding?"

"The Warden's brown."

"Good God! you do not mean to say you have stolen it?"

"Stolen—quotha!" said the moss-trooper, in an angry tone. "I wuss, Sir Traveller, ye wad wale your words better."

"What do you call it then?"

"Ta'en him with the strong hand to be sure—grippit him—as the Warden, if he had a chance, wad grip me."

"And how came we here?"

"I'm sure ye may guess that, as I should hae guessed it mysel'. If you clap a saddle on a strange horse, and ride him at night, on a beaten road and at a pace, ye may do something wi' him: but if ye walk him in the dark, on plain or in forest—guide him as you will, he will in spite of ye, and without your kenning it, keep wearing round, and round, and round, till he find his nose at his ain stable door—and that's just what's chanced here."

"And what purpose you? for these fellows with the light still keep moving, and are not far from us."

"Oh there's plenty o' time to think o' that. They maun follow the hound, and no' a turn or twist, or a bough, or a branch, that we made acquaintance wi', but they must tak' their share o'. But haud your tongue, and let's see what's best for't."

There was silence for two or three minutes, and the young Borderer seemed to give himself up to his own reflections.

"It'll no do," said he, at length, "with this

brute atween my legs, to try ony mair that will-o'-the-wisp sort o' wark. Sooner or later they wad grip us. We maun hae sure ground to gang on."

"And where is it to be found?"

"By the cart track at the water side. It's scarce mair than a fit wide, but its weel marked; and that horse of yours — though neither your e'en nor mine could see it—is nae doubt accustomed to cross country roads, and will keep it brawly. Though I deny not that it may need some hard riding, but Dick Fenwick said that ye are no that ill in the saddle."

"Never fear me," said the Italian. "Whatever horse can do, I can."

"Weel—weel. If it be sae, we may get through after a'. And sae we'll just to the track."

"And how far are we from it?"

"Twa mile and a bittock."

"And how, in the name of Heaven, if we cannot see it, when we are on it, are we to find it, when it is two miles off?"

"Come and learn."

The moss-trooper moved onwards as he spoke, closely followed by his companion. Once more he approached the Lodge—keeping it about two hundred yards to the left. From time to time, as they passed, he turned his head, as if to guide himself by its light; and then, as it disappeared in the distance, twice or thrice cast his eyes anxiously forward, apparently in search of some new landmark. Suddenly he reined up his horse."

"There," continued he in a joyous tone, pointing to a glimmer among the trees. "Div' ye see that?"

His companion replied in the affirmative.

"It's the light of the farm-house," continued the moss-trooper, "we'el do weel eneugh now."

With the words he approached it. When he had ventured as near as he deemed consistent with safety, he made a semicircle round it, as if it had been the pivot of his movements, till all at once the travellers emerged from the forest, and found themselves once more in the open flat which fringed the burn side;

and in a minute after, the murmur of its tiny waters came upon the ear.

"That," said Kinmont Willie in a whisper, as he pointed to the little stream, "must be our guide to the road," and at a pace as rapid as the darkness would permit, he made his way along its banks.

After about half an hour's riding, the ground shelved rapidly, and the travellers found themselves by a little river.

"It's the water that runs by Tom Dixon's," said Willie. "We're a' right now; for on this side o't runs the track I spoke o'." And turning his horse's head, he retraced, for a few yards, his steps, and once more scrambled to the top of the bank, that formed the boundary of the stream.

As soon as he had reached it, the moss-trooper jumped from his saddle, and flinging himself on his hands and knees proceeded in search of—to use a dignified phrase—the thoroughfare.

The task was no easy one. The highway in question, was merely a dray-track on the turf, which connected Tom Dixon's hostelry

with the village below. It was over-grown with grass, and had little resemblance to a road, unless the term be applied to a narrow line, some ten inches wide, between the wheel marks, where the passage of the horses, or pedestrians, who frequented the ale house, had formed a beaten path.

Towards this, for some fifty or sixty yards, Willie crawled patiently; ever keeping as a guide the murmurs of the rivulet. His perseverance was, at length, rewarded, for his hand found itself in a rut, and immediately after he was in the path. A low whistle summoned his friend to his side.

"Praise be blessed!" said he, "I have found it at last, and no ower soon; for hark ye," he continued (as the sullen bay of the blood hound came upon the ear) "to the red dog's accursed throat. But there is your horse upon the track. He will be mair accustomed to that sort of wark than the Warden's, and will keep it better. So on wi' ye."

The Italian, obedient to his instructions, led the way, and Willie mounted and followed him.

Their progress, however, was slow. So long as the sharp click of the horses' tread was audible, all went well. But every now and then, the sound lost its echo, and the dull footfall that succeeded it, announced that their steeds had left the hard surface, and were upon the turf. Again and again, did Willie jumping from his horse, scramble on hand and knee in search of the dray-tracks, and again and again remounting, did he and his companion resume their route.

Still they progressed; but it was evident that the advance of their pursuers was more rapid than their own. Repeated stoppages necessarily lost much time, while the note of the blood hound behind, as it became more and more distinct, showed that Lord Scrope's horsemen were gaining on them.

Even the moss-trooper's usual *sang froid* seemed to be deserting him, for, for some minutes, he had been casting anxious glances at the sky.

"I wish the moon were up," muttered he to himself. "The auld limmer is bound to gi'e us a lift at siccan a time as this, for frae Johnny

Groat's to Lunnun, there's nane like sae weel to look on her face, as us lads by the Border. But here she comes."

As he spoke, the Queen of Heaven shewed herself above the horizon, and her yet faint rays tipt with silver the mountain tops around them. Gradually the welcome beams sank on forest and river, and brought into full relief the narrow path they were following. Ever and anon, however, as it swept round some rock or mass of brushwood, the grateful light would be lost, and the road appeared darker than ever. Their progress, therefore, was still slow, while closer and closer came the deep bay of the hound, varied at intervals with the shouts and cries of the excited band that accompanied it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASS.

THEIR course had hitherto been nearly level, winding along the grassy flats which skirted the river's banks. The further side, however, was rocky and precipitous, and it appeared that that which they followed was about to assume the same character, for all at once the road rose rapidly, diverging, at the same time, to a considerable distance from the water, as if the ground in its immediate neighbourhood were too broken to admit of passage.

The steepness of the acclivity was not calculated to promote the speed of the fugitives. What was worse still, the moon was not sufficiently high in the heavens, to lift herself above

the ridge of the hill they were ascending, and its western side was thus deprived of even the faint light which had hitherto aided their progress. The path was thus lost more frequently than ever, and the bay of the blood-hound came nearer and nearer. The summit, however, was reached at last. It was welcomed with joy by the moss-trooper.

"Thanks be to gracious!" said he, "that job's done, and now, if luck haud but for five minutes, we'll snap our fingers at thae chields ahint us. D'ye see," said he, pointing to a little village whose white walls and peaked gables could be descried in the distance, for on the flat, unwooded summit of the hill, the moon-light was strong, and everything around distinctly visible, "d'ye see thae houses there? They stand on a knowe just aboon the water, and by them, a road has been howkit down to the ford. Ance through that, and we'll do."

"And what prevents us?" said his companion.

"Why ye see the bank's sae steep, its only by

following the nick in the brae, that we can win through."

"I understand so. But where's the difficulty?"

"Ye maun ken that the road runs through a farm-yard, and just where they've cut deep into the bank they've put a yett. The farmer body, is ane of the Border watches, and gets wages frae my Lord, for looking after 't. It was open this morning, and is doubtless sae now; for they dinna, for ordinar, draw the bolt, unless they hear o' strange folk being about. Sae gie yer naig the spur, and we'll hae a try for't; for we maun get through afore they get a glisk o' us."

He started off, as he spoke, at a rapid pace, followed by the Italian, for the smooth surface of the turf offered no obstacle to their progress. They were not long in approaching the village. As they came nearer, however, the sound of their hoofs caught the ear of the shepherd dogs that slumbered round it, and the four-footed guardians at once gave the alarm, by loud and continued barking.

"My malison on the tykes," said Willie. "They'll ruin a'."

His fears were only too well grounded, for the watchful tenant of the farm, accustomed from his office and his Border neighbourhood, to sleep lightly, rushed from the house for the purpose of ascertaining the cause of the outcry. Even then, all was not lost. The character of the approaching horsemen was as yet unknown, and the gate might be passed before its janitor had learned whether they were friend or foe.

Unhappily, at that moment, the pursuers appeared at the top of the little hill, and their leader, probably divining the intention of the fugitives, fired his matchlock. The loud echo caught the farmer's ear. He turned instinctively to the spot from whence it came. There against the sky, was the dark mass of the horsemen, and high above, blazed the turf on the heads of their spears. The man recognized in a moment the signal, and acted with the decision of one to whom such signals were familiar. He sprang, forward and, at the risk of being trodden under foot, closed the bar.

It was not too soon. Hot on his cheek, as they passed, came the breath of the rushing steeds; for Willie and his companion had so nearly reached the gate, that nothing but the high training of their horses, and the practised hand of the riders, prevented their being dashed against its wood work, and both, on being disappointed of a passage, had instinctively swept round to the left, following the course of the fence of the little enclosure.

In an instant after, the moss-trooper checked his horse, and drew a pistol from his belt, as if he would have forced a path; but a glance at the advancing horsemen seemed to change his purpose, for he once more started off, retracing his steps in the direction of the village, and shouting to his companion to follow his example.

One minute saw them free of the farm-yard—two more brought them to the end of the little hamlet; and as soon as they had cleared it, Willie turned sharp to the left and took his way at speed across an open down.

Short as the delay was, it was sufficient to abridge materially the interval which had separated them from their pursuers. Lord Scrope's horsemen had already accomplished half the distance between the top of the hill and the village; and on seeing their foemen emerge from the straggling houses, that had for the instant sheltered them from their view, they gave a shout of triumph, and leaving the track, set off across the open moor in pursuit.

For a few minutes, the pace was killing, and it was difficult to say which had the advantage. Gradually, however, the fleeter-footed steeds of the fugitives drew ahead—bit by bit the distance was increased, till at length after ten minutes riding, the pursuers, one by one, as the wind and bottom of their horses failed them, dropped off in the distance.

"We'll do now Willie?" said the Italian with a smile.

"No yet. The pinch is still to come. If we can clear that, they may whistle for us. But to say the truth, it's an ugly place by day-light, and naething but a needcessity like this

wad mak' me face it now. But keep the naig at its speed, for they'll gang down the pinch faster than oursels ; and if we gain na a quarter of an hour's law we are gane men," and with a fresh touch of the iron heel, he pressed his horse.

The ground which they were traversing was a little table-land. It was perfectly free from timber, and the rays of the moon, now high in the heavens, made everything as clear as day-light. The surface, too, was hard and unbroken, and over its smooth turf, the mettled animals proceeded with unabated speed. After half an hour's riding, they approached its confines, and what, according to the Borderer, was to be the scene of their difficulties.

For about four miles above its junction with the little stream that passed Tom Dixon's hostelry, the left bank of the Irthing rose perpendicularly in wooded steeps impassable to human foot. At one point, and at one point only, could the water be approached with safety, and that was by a tongue of land —a dent in the cliff—that shot down from

the elevated region which the fugitives were now traversing, to the stream below. Narrow throughout, it was occasionally scarce twenty yards wide, and on either side was bounded by dark and deep ravines, down which, in a succession of cataracts, two brooks sought their way towards the greater river.

Along this ridge was a path, if path it could be termed, which was occasionally used by the inhabitants of the wild district. Even to a pedestrian, the descent was perilous enough. The idea of traversing it on horseback was one that never would have suggested itself to any but desperate men.

Such was the spot for which the moss-trooper was now making. As he approached it, the forest began again to show itself, first in solitary trees, and then as their shelter created a warmer temperature, in patches of ragged hawthorn and alder. Through the swampy tract of which these were the denizens, Willie guided his horse. As he advanced, the ground gently elevated itself, growing firmer and narrower as it rose, till, at length, it terminated

in a knoll, crowned by a gigantic boulder stone. On one side, from its base, the bank shot down perpendicularly, to the ravine below; on the other, between the sister-chasm on the left, and the rocky barrier, was a ledge barely broad enough to admit the passage of a horse. Beyond, stretched the turfy ridge, along which was to be their course, sinking rapidly towards the river; and here and there, through the stunted trees that dotted its surface, came the occasional moonlight.

"This is the head of the pinch, man," said the moss-trooper, as he reached the boulder stone, and jumped from his saddle. "Sae to the grund wi' ye. We maun lead the naigs down the hill; and gang ye first, for I doubt if the Warden's brown will face it, unless he see his neebour afore him."

In obedience to his instructions, the Italian accordingly led the way; and without much difficulty. The Northallerton colt, probably accustomed to the perils of mountain travel, slid, with all four feet together, down the steep bank like a cat. By his side rushed his master,

throwing his left arm, at intervals, round some convenient tree, while with his right he checked the animal with a powerful rein, and by throwing him on his haunches, arrested for a moment his head-long course.

The high-bred steed of Lord Scrope, was not so manageable. Sometimes, indeed, encouraged by the example of his companion, he would make his way downwards, lifting one foot at a time, and snorting with terror; but occasionally, as the path appeared steeper and more perilous, he would resolutely fix his two fore-feet on the earth, and for awhile refuse to stir.

In this way, though with infinite difficulty, the fugitives had accomplished half the descent, when the path terminated in a little promontory. Bad as the road had hitherto been, it now seemed positively impracticable. For some twelve feet, the ground shelved down almost perpendicularly, and notwithstanding the exertions of Kinmont Willie, aided by the shouts of his companion, the Warden's horse would not face it.

It was in vain that the Signor Octavio got his more docile steed down the bank, in the hope that the brown colt might be induced to borrow courage from its example, and follow. It was in vain that he tied it to a tree, and returning to the top of the platform lashed from behind, with a wand torn from a neighbouring bush, Lord Scrope's horse. The terrified animal would not move.

Things were now becoming critical. From the top of the pass might be heard the deep-mouthed baying of the hound, and the shouts of those who led it, came distinct upon the ear. The two looked into each other's face in dismay.

"There's but ae thing for't freend," said Willie, "I maun ride him down it."

"Ride him! It is madness. You will break your neck."

"As weel here as at Hairibee," was the cool reply, and he jumped into the saddle. Thrice fiercely striking him with the spur, did he try to force the horse down the pass, and thrice the terrified animal plunged violently, and standing right on end refused the descent.

"I maun gallop him at it," said Willie in despair. "I maun ride him as Bothwell-haugh rode, after he had dealt wi' the Regent; for here comes the hound, and it's our only chance."

The platform was scarce twenty yards square, and occupied the entire surface of the ridge. The moss-trooper rode the horse to its utmost limit, and turning him sharp round, advanced with a gallop towards the precipitous shelf, that had hitherto checked his progress. As he approached it, the animal made as if it would have swerved, when the Borderer plucked his dagger from its sheath, and drove it right into its haunch; and maddened with the steel, the horse rushed wildly down.

The Signor Octavio followed anxiously to the edge, expecting to have found them both with broken limbs. But he was agreeably disappointed. The horse, indeed, had fallen on landing; but spur and bit, soon recovered him, and he now stood, trembling in every limb, and with blood-shot eye and foaming nostril, but still unhurt.

"I'm a' right, freend," shouted Willie joyously.

"Sae down with ye instantly, and into the saddle; for be the road bad or gude, we maun ride it."

The Italian mounted. The lower part of the descent was fortunately, not so precipitous as its higher portion, and ten minutes more, found them at the bottom of the pass, and on the banks of the Irthing.

It was a wild scene. On either hand as far as eye could reach, lay a deep glen, hemmed in by mountain ranges, covered with timber; from the midst of which, here and there, jutted forth a projecting rock. To the left, and where the path first struck the river, towered a cliff, some hundred feet high. It was as smooth on its surface, as if it had been hewn with a chisel, and rose perpendicular from the waters edge, to its summit. In front, and at the other side of the stream, was a narrow ravine which cut deep into the opposite bank, and seemed to lead to the wastes beyond. But except this, opening there was none, and above and below, the rocky banks shot up from the river's brink like a wâll. At their

foot rolled the Irthing, dashing through the boulder stones that lay tumbled o'er its bed, and whitening every thing with foam; except at the base of the column-like rock, where its waters expanded themselves, and formed an untroubled, pellucid pool. Down the chasm, shot the rays of the fair moon, tinting cliffs and stream with silver, and, from the contrast, investing with a double gloom, the black forest that environed them.

But picturesque as the landscape was, the travellers had neither time nor inclination to note its beauties.

"There's the ford," said Willie, pointing to the little lake. "Ance across that, and we're safe. But mind ye that its bottom is a sheet of smooth rock. So keep a steady hand on the rein, or the naig will lose its footing. And now on wi' ye."

The Signor Octavio moved forward, and by careful attention to his instructions, crossed in safety, though not without peril, as the rock was as slippery as glass. The Borderer was not so fortunate. The brown colt had become nervous

from its roll in the descent, and each slide on the polished surface, added to its terror. It had passed over, however, the deeper part of the stream, and was within a few yards of the further bank, when its footing once more failed it. The last mischance was destined to be more fatal than its predecessors. There was a slide, a snort, a plunge, and in less time than it has taken to describe it, the gallant steed sank beneath the stream.

Willie was on his feet in a moment. He seized the horse by the head, and succeeded, though with some difficulty, in keeping its nostrols above water. Twice or thrice did the poor animal make a desperate effort to recover itself, but the treacherous rock gave no holding ground, and, at length, it lay still, as if from exhaustion, moaning at intervals, and passively leaving its head to be supported by its master.

In the meantime, the bay of the blood-hound was becoming more and more distinct; and at last, the dog burst from the gloomy cover of the forest, and with an eager howl, gave evidence of its approach to its prey. A cry of

exultation from the attendant horsemen, accompanied it; for a single glance at the moss-trooper made them acquainted with his catastrophe, and their approaching triumph.

"Ho—ho—ho—" shouted their leader. The stag has taken soyle. But I will put a spear in his flank:" and with lance in rest, he rode into the stream.

"Be aff wi' ye, Sir Traveller!" shouted Willie, as he saw his enemies' approach. "Be aff wi' ye, while the play's gude, for I'm ayont help."

The Italian instead of complying with the generous request, jumped from the saddle, and hastily removing from its sling the petronel or carbine which hung at his breast, raised it to his shoulder, and levelled it at the horseman entering the river. Apparently, however, something like hesitation came over him, for he suddenly changed the direction of the weapon, lowered it, and fired. The shot struck the horse in the chest. The animal reared, and with his rider fell into the water. Then came the convulsions of the dying steed, and the

shrieks of the drowning man, and forgetting for a moment the object of their pursuit, his companions, abandoning horses and arms, gave every energy to saving the life of their chief.

The shot which had so unexpectedly checked the hostile band, brought good fortune to Willie. The report of the carbine, magnified a hundred fold by the echoes of the narrow glen, startled the moss-trooper's horse from its lethargy, and it once more made a convulsive effort to recover its footing. It was more fortunate than the previous ones. The brown colt regained its legs, and the Borderer led it safe to the further bank. Without uttering a word, he mounted and making a sign to the Italian to follow, struck into the narrow pass that communicated with the interior, and in a few minutes, the fugitives found themselves on the edge of the treeless and houseless waste of Bewcastle.

As soon as they reached it, Willie checked his horse.

"We'll do now;" said he, in a gay tone. "Sae we'll rest the naigs abit."

"But these fellows will be on us in a twinkling."

"Na—na. Nae fear o' that. There's a braw moon in the lift, and the grund's gey gude atween this and Liddel. They'll no fash us."

His prognostications proved correct. Dispirited by the misadventure of their leader, and probably aware, that in the open country, they could not cope successfully with the steeds of the moss-trooper and his companion, the hostile party made no effort to follow them. For a few minutes, accordingly, Willie and the Italian breathed their horses; and then, once more turning their heads northwards, resumed, though at a more leisurely pace, their journey towards the Border.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARY KER.

We must leave the travellers for a while, and turn our attention to another personage of our drama—one already too long neglected—the fair lady whose loves we have undertaken to chronicle.

In the southern part of Scotland, and about half way between the Frith of Forth and the English border, lies a tract of country which is now known by the name of Selkirkshire. In ancient times it bore the designation of "the Forest," and was a crown domain, reserved for "hart and hind and dae and rae" and other beasts of vert and venery, the pursuit

of which, in a rude age, constituted alike the amusement, and the occupation of royalty.

To the last degree irregular in its surface, and watered by numerous rivers, it formed the Ardennes of the northern kingdom—alternating in mountain and plain, shady dingle and open heath. The Yarrow, one of the streams which drained its waters, is still famous in Border song, and upon its southern bank stood Newark Castle, the residence, when engaged in their sylvan sports, of the Royal Nimrods.

It was a castellated building, furnished with court-yard, outer-walls, and the ordinary defences of feudal strong-holds. In the centre of the ballium, or enclosed ground, rose the Donjon-tower or Keep, rectangular in shape and of great height. Its solitary gateway was to the north, and opened into a large vaulted hall extending the whole length of the castle. To the right, a spiral staircase led to the chamber of dais or principal apartment, while above were numerous bed-rooms required for the Court and its domestics. Time,

the ruthless enemy of most buildings, has left unscathed the old hunting lodge of the Scottish Kings, and though lichen and ivy clothe its walls, it still stands almost as entire as on the day of its erection, and with a beauty which age has added to, rather than diminished.

It is to the state apartment of this building that we are now to conduct the reader.

It was a long low room, with an immense fire-place at either end. The walls and ceiling were panelled with black oak, but the rays of an autumn sun had found their way through the numerous windows, and made cheerful a chamber to which the heavy and sombre coloured furniture would have given otherwise but a melancholy character.

Its only occupants were two girls. Both were dressed exactly alike, as if to intimate that they held some office in the royal household. The hoods were French—the jackets of blue velvet—the collars broad, and to use a term of an after period, vandyked at the edges —the skirts of blue and white striped silk. Yet with the dress, the similarity ended. The

one who occupied a large arm chair by the side of the fire—immersed in the perusal of Spencer's Fairy Queen—was a girl of about four and twenty. The face might have been that of a Greek muse. The lofty forehead, the straight nose, the short upper lip, the chiselled nostril—all were in accordance with the most rigid forms of classic beauty. The hair was jet black, the eye-lash long and the cheek colourless—it might not be from bad health, and yet there was a shade of care upon the brow, as if the waking dreams were tinged with a recollection of past, or a presentiment of future sorrow.

Her companion, who sat near the window, was somewhat younger, and of a very different expression of countenance. She was a beautiful girl of about twenty, with auburn hair and laughing dark blue eyes. The features were small, and though wanting the regularity of her companion's, were perhaps more attractive, from the perpetual change of shade and sunshine which flitted over them, and told the tale of each emotion as it passed. In

person, she was rather below the middle size and inclined to *embonpoint*—the bust full—the waist small—the skin perfect.

At the moment we present her to our readers, she was bending over a tambour-frame upon which she seemed to be executing a piece of worsted work; and if any inference were to be drawn from the expressive motions of lip or foot—with no very distinguished satisfaction at the progress of her labours.

"No," said she, as she flung the frame upon the ground in a moment of petulance, "I will no more to-day. That siege of Troy will be the death of me. Ah! why did the Fates give Queen Anne so classic a taste; or whisper to her that my unfortunate fingers were able to bring her ideas into life."

Her remark seemed to arouse the attention of her companion, for she laid the book upon her lap, and turning round with an air of great affection, and the manner of one who was addressing a spoilt child, said. "What, again in a pet, Mary love, I am ashamed of you!"

"Yes, I am in a pet;" was the answer. "It

is very well for you, Lady Beatrice Ruthven, who are ever wrapt up in a world of your own thoughts, to look down with contempt upon the troubles of us ordinary mortals. But if I am in a pet, I have good cause."

"And what," said the lady by the fire, in a tone of affected sympathy, "what ails Mistress Mary Ker?"

"What ails me, indeed. It is the eye of Achilles."

"And what is the matter with the hero?"

"O Beatrice, how can you be so irritating as to ask me? You know I have got him on his knees before Briseis, and he is kissing her hand, and he ought to be gazing at her, with intense admiration, and I can't—" and the fair lady stopped suddenly, as if unable to find words adequate to express her annoyance.

"Alas! sweet love, you cannot get the worsted to look affectionate enough. Is that your cause of sorrow."

Mary made a petulant sign of assent.

"Well, my poor girl," continued her companion, "the cause of your vexation is just enough.

For after all, I suspect that this work of yours is but an allegory. You are angry at the absence of affection in the eyes of your worsted cavalier, as a mode of intimating that there is an affection whose absence you mourn, though it may not be exactly that to be found in the glance of Achilles. Ah! had Queen Anne a touch of kindness in her, she would not have allowed two of her maidens to die here in solitude, but would have sent some of the gay gallants of her court, to bear them company."

"I should have given her slight thanks for the trouble," said Mary, haughtily. "There is neither knight nor noble at Holyrood, whose eyes I would so soon look at, as those of my own dear Achilles."

"Possibly enough," said Lady Beatrice, with a malicious smile. "But there are gay gallants in Scotland, who are beyond the precincts of the Court; and if we find them not in city, we may perchance, discover them in forest;" and she looked at her companion with a glance of intelligence.

It seemed to be understood, for brow and

cheek were in an instant dyed with crimson, but the young lady soon recovered her self-possession.

"You are as mysterious as a priestess of Delphi," said she, "but the days of oracles are passed—at least, the days of those who comprehend them."

"By my troth, Mistress Mary, I admire your courage. Not comprehend them, indeed! I had rather trust for truth to the colour of the cheek, than to the word of the lip."

"I spoke in sober earnest," said her now, really angry companion, "and I protest, I know not your meaning; but, if you have one, whose loving glance is it that I value so highly?"

"The Lord Warden's."

"Do you speak of my brother?"

"No, no. Not the Lord Warden of the East Marches, but the Lord Warden of the West—not the Sir Robert, but the Sir Walter—not the Ker, but the Scott."

"So—so," said the daughter of the Baron of Cessford, as she drew up her person to its full height, and eye and lip expressed the most in-

tense disdain, "your bolt is shot at last. I marvel that Lady Beatrice's enacted oracle made not a better prophecy."

"No bad one, nevertheless!" and the fair speaker nodded, as if confident of her ground.

The colour once more deepened upon Mary Ker's cheek.

"Away with this bye-play;" said she at length. "I hate mysteries. So let us have done with them. You allege that—" and the girl hesitated.

"Go on," said her companion, in a mocking tone.

"You allege" continued Mary, gaining courage, "that I—that I love the Lord Warden."

Lady Beatrice nodded.

"How absurd! It is scarce a month ago, that in the garden at Cessford, I refused him."

"You have regretted it ever since."

"I forbade him to return."

"It was because you feared his life being endangered by your brother."

"I accepted the office of Maid of Honour to the Queen, to be freed from his addresses."

"You volunteered to come out to this solitary

dungeon, that you might bring yourself into his neighbourhood."

"The Lady Beatrice judges of my conduct by her own. Cowden-Knowes is as near to Newark as Branksome, and Sir John Home, would be a welcome visitor, whatever might be the Lord Warden."

The Lady Beatrice flushed instantly, from temple to chin. For a moment, there was a struggle between nature and art, but her feelings were too strong for control, and she burst into tears.

The sight at once disarmed Mary, and she hurried to her companion. "Pardon me, Beatrice;" said she. "Dear Beatrice, I pray you, pardon me. You entrusted me with the secret of your affection, and I was worse than cruel to trifle with it. Plague take the men, say I!"

"Nay, Mary," said her companion, as with a sigh, she recovered her self-possession, "I will scarce say Amen to that, nor, if you spoke the whole truth, would you."

"But why speak of them at all? Why allude to this—to the Lord Warden?"

"Because I have seen much of him when I was abroad with my brothers, and I believe he deserves your affection."

"My affection?"

"Yes, I repeat the word. You love him. Why should you not love him?"

"Why should I?"

"He is very handsome!"

"I have seen an uglier bogle at Christmas."

"Then what beautiful eyes he has!"

"Good enough to keep him from falling into a ditch."

"And a leg."

"Most men's look indifferent well, in a flame coloured stocking!"

"You dispraise him on purpose. What can you say against him? Is he not a gallant soldier?"

"He has scarce hair enough on his lip, to make a pouncet brush."

"And dressed *point device*."

"No wonder, for they say he spends half his nights in devising the shape of a new doublet."

"By my troth! considering your indifference

to his good gifts, you seem to have taken marvellous close note of them. Nay, you need not blush. It is as it should be. I brought with me a gay hood, from Milan. Eyes have not as yet looked on it, but I will do thee all honour, *ma mignonne*. To-morrow, will I set it forth to have it ready for the wedding."

"It were lost labour."

"Why?"

"Because that wedding will never be."

"And for what reason?"

"For many. First and foremost, need I tell you, are our family feuds. For seventy years there has been perpetual warfare between the Kers and the Scotts. Sir Walter's forefather and mine have alike been its victims. Even now the feeling rages as bitter as ever. But six weeks by-gone the King could scarce prevent a pitched battle in the High-street of Edinburgh, between my brother and the Lord Warden at the head of their respective followers, and though the royal authority checked the struggle at the time, it was only to delay it; for Sir Robert and Buccleugh

fought the week after, and with what results you know well. My brother's second Will Shaw was well nigh killed."

"You might have added that your brother's life was in Buccleugh's hands, and he spared it for your sake."

"It matters little what was the cause of the clemency—the hate is not the less fierce on both sides. Hear old Euphame, my nurse, on the subject."

"That will I not; for no one has less just right to speak of it. It is well known that her father was the man, who, some sixty years ago, stabbed old Sir Walter, the Warden's grandsire, and yet he—the assassin—died in his bed."

"Yes: but where? In exile in a foreign land. The fear of the vengeance of the Scotts forced him to take refuge in the south of England, and there he lingered out existence, far far away from home, kindred, everything with which his mind associated happiness."

"Well, if he gained nothing by his banishment, such was not the case with Euphame.

She left this country—so goes the tale—a rude unformed girl, with no claims to distinction beyond a distant relationship to your house. How came she back? As you know well, whim, chance—what you will—made her be selected as companion by the daughters of the great noble who had given her father shelter, and when at his death, ten years after, she returned to her native land, it was with an English tongue that shames us northern barbarians, and a haughtiness of manner and bearing that would do no discredit to Queen Bess. Her father might have murmured at his exile. To Euphame it brought nothing but good—education—position—manners—marriage.

"It may be so; but you should show the dark as well as the bright side of the picture. Her husband fell in these Border quarrels. Her only child, a daughter, married Armstrong of Kinmont, and he also died by the hand of the Scotts. Is it strange, then, that she should hold revenge as a matter of religion; or that

she bear an ever-living animosity to the clan, whose enmity has robbed her of all that is dear to her."

"Alas, alas, my dear girl!" said Lady Beatrice, "this perpetuating of hate leads to no good end. Have I not seen enough of it in my own house? My grandfather, Lord Ruthven, stabbed Rizzio in Queen Mary's presence, but his turn of evil came, and he died a banished man. Again, we became powerful, and my father made King James a prisoner: yet he, too, had his day of sorrow, for he fell upon the scaffold; and now my brothers—"

"You have surely no reason to fear for them? Both are in high favour."

"True, because they are absent. But in a few months they return and then—"

"Well, and then? They cannot be mad enough to show discontent."

Lady Beatrice made no reply, but looked long and fixedly at Mary. She then pressed her hands to her temples, as if she would have deadened the effect of a passing spasm.

"We will not speak of my brothers," said she, at length, in a low faint voice. "They are at present at Padua. Let them remain there."

"But you have not answered my question," said her companion, in a tone of excited curiosity, "they would not, I repeat, be mad enough to shew discontent?"

"You answer it yourself, *ma mie*," said Lady Beatrice, with a forced smile. "It would be madness: and yet were it otherwise, where find you the difference between them and you? They would be but doing what you do—clinging to the memory of past evil, and visiting the sins of the father upon the children."

"Alas—alas!"

"Yes, my dear love, ponder on these things well, and suffer not your interests and happiness to be wrecked for a vain imagination. You love this young man, do you not."

"No. In simple honesty, I can say no. Handsome he is, it is undeniable—brave, beyond all question—kind and generous—a good son—and a liberal master."

"And if he be all this—would you have more?"

"Yes. All this is the Knight of Cowden-Knowes, and to you this is sufficient, for you would be satisfied to pass away existence in the quiet monotony of domestic life. So would not I. But here comes old Euphame; methinks I hear her crutch upon the stair."

"And with her, I leave you," said Lady Beatrice, speaking hurriedly, "I detest that woman, for she is the spirit of evil. She loves you well, but it is after her own fashion, and she would rather see you die at her feet, than have you possess happiness, except in the way in which she would mete it out for you."

She rose as she spoke, and passing with a grave and haughty bow, the person who entered, left the chamber.

CHAPTER XIV.

EUPHAME CRANSTOUN.

THE old woman, who entered the room, was about seventy. But though the hair which shaded her temples, and displayed itself beneath her kerch, was white as snow, yet time seemed to have laid his hand gently on her, for her port was erect, and her step firm.

In youth, she must have been eminently handsome. The eye was still strong and bright as an eagle's, the nose slightly aquiline, and finely formed, the mouth haughty, and the air decided. A staff was in her right hand, but it seemed intended rather to give dignity to her steps, than to aid them, for it was with

firm footing that she crossed the chamber, and advanced towards Mary. Her temper appeared slightly ruffled, and it was with something of asperity she said:

"By God's truth, Mistress Mary, that friend of yours, is but of scant courtesy; she flounces out by me, as if I were the wife of some burgess of Jeddart."

"You forget, my dear nurse," said her companion, in a conciliating tone, "that if she is proud, she has some excuse for it. Her grandsire married Queen Margaret."

"The more shame to him, seeing that her former husband, my Lord of Angus, was living and undivorced. But she need not carry her head so high for that—she comes not from the royal nest."

"Still, dear Euphame, if she be at times forgetful, you may pardon her, for she has had much sorrow to plead as her excuse."

"Well, Mary, are others free from it? Could not I speak, too, of father and husband, and at this moment, I might say grandson."

"Grandson! you do not mean Willie?" said

Mary, clasping her hands, and the tears starting to her eye. "You do not say that anything has happened to my foster-brother."

"Nay, nay! I know nothing," said the old woman, looking affectionately upon her young charge, "and yet I feared—"

"What?"

"Willie has crossed the Border."

"And is that all?" said the girl smiling, through her tears. "Fie, Euphame, how you frightened me."

"Was it without cause?"

"Yes! In these days of truce, what is more common than to course a stag on the English hills. I have, myself, gone with my brother, to chase the dun deer, on the southern slopes of Cheviot, and no one said us nay."

"True, for Sir Robert is too great a man to meddle with, but Willie is no noble, and has besides a feud with Lord Scrope. He has never pardoned the boy's making away with those Durham heifers, that used to feed in the meadow under the Castle walls."

"You apprehend danger then?"

"Do I apprehend it? Need you ask the question? The English Warden ever keeps his word, and he has sworn that if he lay hand upon Willie, he will have him to Hairibee."

"He dare not."

"Dare not, quotha! I will say this for Lord Scrope's honour, there be but few things he will not dare to do. Why, girl, what should prevent him?"

"His mistress's anger."

"Pshaw! If all tales be true, the doited old Queen has enough on her hands, without troubling herself about the hanging of a Border reiver."

"The anger of the Scotch Warden then."

"Of whom said ye?"

"Of the Scotch Warden."

"Of Buccleugh?"

The question seemed an embarrassing one, for there was a moment's hesitation, a faint colouring of the cheek, a quiver in the eyelid, and with a voice that was slightly tremulous. Mary rejoined.

"Yes, of Buccleugh."

"Mary!" said the old woman, in tones of anger, "are your brains gone a wool-gathering. You know as well as I do, that your foster-brother's whole race, has been unfriends with the Scotts. His father, if he was not in the following of your house, ever rode with the Maxwells. He was at the Lockerby Lick, and fell there. I have not forgotten it," said Euphame, in a low tone, as her face darkened, and her brow scowled, "nor I warrant me have they."

"And even if it were so, what has their memory to do with this?"

"Do you ask? why but this, that if the news came to Branksome, that Willie was to be hanged to-morrow, there would be but one voice in hall, that Lord Scrope was doing them a friend's act, by ridding them of an enemy."

"Nay, nay! my dear nurse," said Mary; in a fondling tone, as she put her arms round the old woman's neck. "In all this you deceive yourself, for you assume upon either side an antipathy that may not exist. I have

heard Willie often say"—and the girl stopped and coloured.

"What?" said Euphame, in tones of sudden anger, as if her suspicions had been excited by the hesitation of her companion, "what? I say—did the boy belie his race?"

"Nay, he said nothing that shamed him to utter, or me to repeat; but you know that he held the horses when"—and once more Mary hesitated.

"Out with it girl—out with it I say. Have you lost both words and memory."

"Neither Euphame," said Mary, as she withdrew her arms from her nurse's neck, and her manner assumed an air of quiet haughtiness. "It is a matter which needs no concealing; Willie held the horses when my brother fought with Buccleugh, and he said that the Baron of Branksome, had demeaned himself like a noble and a gallant gentleman."

"Ha!" said the old woman, as her eyes flashed fire. "Did he so, indeed? And you have thought over this, and treasured this.

So—so! It is as I have long suspected. That interview in the garden, at Cessford, was not the unwelcome thing you called it. My curses on the feeble weapon of Sir Robert, who allowed himself to be mastered by such a popinjay."

"Euphame," said the young girl, in a calm tone, but with great dignity, as she drew herself up to her full height, and eye and manner alike gave evidence of anger, "you forget the respect due to me, and to my house; nor do you less injustice to Buccleugh. If he fought, the quarrel was not of his seeking. If he had the better in the struggle, who could blame him for that? least of all the house of Cessford, when he left life to its heir."

"And do you tell me this? Do you dare to utter in my ears, the defence of our great enemy? Have I seen father, husband, son-in-law expend their heart's blood in your quarrels only to learn that they have died forgotten and unavenged—and all, because a young girl has been caught by the glories of a piled ruff, or a new fashioned doublet."

"Enough of this Euphame," said Mary coldly. "You have been a mother to me;—your grandson is my foster-brother; and I will not allow present folly to efface past kindness. Yet as it is from no slight feeling, that you speak so strongly, I will be thus far frank with you. I do not love this man. I will not marry him. There is between his house and ours, too long a catalogue of evil, to permit such a union; for were I even to forgive, I could not forget."

Euphame clasped her hands, and bent her head, as if her feeling of thankfulness could best find expression in a silent prayer.

"God bless you, my child," said she at length, "for taking that load from my heart—had it been otherwise, the day that would have seen your bridal wreath, would have looked upon my bier. Scott and Ker—no, no! Their blood would not mingle in the same basin. And yet, God help me for saying so, but you are young, and a young girl's resolves are apt to melt like snow before a summer's sun. He has been in France, the Lord Warden, and they say, that

gallants learn there how to win a maiden's heart. My child, you may forget."

"Never!"

Euphame said nothing, but she shook her head despondingly, as if unable to give credence to the proffered resolution.

"Never, nurse. Dear nurse, I tell you never. Nay, you still doubt me;" continued she, as she gazed on the old woman's face. Come, I will make you a promise. If I ever consent to marry Buccleugh, you shall be by; and that," continued she, with a somewhat flushed cheek and quivering eye-lid, "is equivalent to saying never, for that mournful face of yours, dear Euphame, were I in my most joyous mood, would tame me down, and make me as melancholy as the inmate of a charnel house. Even now," continued she, with something like a sigh, "the very mention of the subject has thrown a shadow over my spirit. So I will to the bower and the river. For Yarrow," muttered she to herself, "is my Lethe, and the roar of its waters soothes sorrow, for it drowns memory."

So saying, she left the room, while the

old woman, sinking upon one of the divans or low couches, which occupied the deep recesses of the windows, allowed her head to rest upon her hand, and abandoned herself to her own thoughts, as if chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.

Some half hour might have elapsed in this fashion, when she raised her head and looked into the court-yard. Insensibly, her eyes ranged beyond it, and the low fortified walls which formed its boundary, and rested upon the little plain that extended to the eastward at the bottom of the Castle mound.

A solitary figure was passing through it. Once, twice, thrice, did Euphame rub her eyes, as if to aid her defective vision, and then, with a half shriek, she seized her crutch, and hurried from the apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LORD WARDEN.

We must change the scene to the outside of the Castle. As we have already mentioned, it stood on a wooded bluff, at the foot of which, and to the northward, ran the rapid stream of the Yarrow. To the east, the ground was no less precipitous, but there the descent terminated in a little valley. Its surface was unbroken by tree or shrub, and through its centre meandered a stream of crystal water, on its way to the greater river.

On the other side, the ground again rose rapidly. Its lower slopes were covered with forest and brushwood, but the summit of the little

ridge was free from timber. On one spot only, where a green circle described itself upon the turf, stood some eight or ten magnificent trees. They had been sown and tended—so it was whispered—by invisible hands, and the spot was called the Fairy ring, and was famous as a resort for loving swains and maidens; so long, at least, as the daylight lasted: for to approach it in the dark, would have been considered intruding on the sports of its elfin proprietors, and dangerous to the too audacious mortals who might make the attempt.

The magic round was now occupied. Two young men were stretched at length beneath the shadow of its sylvan guardians. From their dress of Kendal green, the bugle-horns suspended by their sides, their short hunting swords and padded gloves on their right hands, it was evident they had been engaged in hawking, or in the chase.

The elder, was a man of about eight-and-twenty — black haired, black browed and swarthy. The face was nevertheless, not uncomely—the eye small, but deep set, sparkling

with fun and full of animal enjoyment—the mouth large—the teeth white, and the jaw broad and firm—at least, as far as might be judged, for the whole of the lower part of the face was lost in a luxuriant, and not particularly well tended beard.

The dress, too, was worn carelessly, and with the air of one who troubled himself not about such vanities, and its wearer now lay at the foot of a tree, leaning his head against its trunk and devoting himself to a long silver-stemmed tobacco pipe, with evidently, no small enjoyment—raising, however, his eyes from time to time, and glancing with a look of good-natured malice at his companion.

The glance was unremarked. His fellow-sportsman was about five-and-twenty, scarcely above the middle height and of a slender make. His dress was like his comrade's in colour and material; but there the similarity ended. The ruff at the neck and wrist was of the finest lace—the doublet of the newest pattern—the large Spanish hat had its feather placed jauntily at the side—the boots were of yellow Cordovan

leather, and lined with velvet—the spurs of gold: —all worn with an attention to effect, which showed an anxiety to appear to the best advantage.

The person was not unworthy of the habiliments. The features were small but handsome —the hazel eyes large and well opened, with something of dreaminess in their glance—while the fair hair fell in carefully arranged curls upon his cheek and neck. Altogether, the impression produced upon the spectator was an agreeable one. There was some indolence and much foppishness; but both might be forgiven, for upon every look, and glance, and lineament was the evidence of a generous nature: accompanied by that air of high breeding, and high birth, which stamps itself so unconsciously upon those, who from their childhood have been, to the circle in which they moved, the objects of attention and respect.

The young cavalier was now stretched at length upon the ground, his head leaning upon his hand, and his eyes riveted on the Border tower with a fixed eager look, as if with the

glance, he would have penetrated its walls, and read the scenes that were passing within.

Some minutes had elapsed in this fashion, and in silence. At length, however, the elder of the loungers finished his pipe, and with the tobacco seemed to vanish his philosophy.

"Come, Buccleugh," said he, "have you had your gaze out yet? As for myself, I finished counting the stones in the walls last week, and were you the greatest dullard that ever tried his hand at arithmetic, you must have conned them over long ago."

The remark only elicited the contemptuous —"Pshaw!"

"By my honour, it is I that should lose my temper. Were it not," continued Mowbray, glancing at his pipe, "for this most rare discovery of excellent Sir Walter, I should long ago have hanged myself in my own garters."

"Pooh! pooh man!" said his companion, gathering himself up lazily and changing his position, as if to enable him the more easily to

hold converse with his friend, "what have you got to grumble at?"

"Pray can you tell me how often we have come hither?"

"Three or four times, perhaps."

"Every day but one since yesterday sen' night, as I'm a Christian sinner."

"And where could you be better?"

"*Ventre bleu*! where could I be better, quotha, why some place or other, where, when it chimed mid-day, we were nearer the hall-table at Branksome."

"Ah, glutton! always thinking of that paunch of yours. You well nigh finished a venison pasty and two stoups of Bordeaux at breakfast this morning."

"And if I did—do you think that a man's matin meal will last him for ever. I eat well before starting, for heaven only knows when I may chance to have the luck to eat again."

"Greedy rogue! We are ever home in time for the evening meal; and you know that William cook complains, that over and

above, you always insist upon having a rere supper, when you should be thinking of going to bed."

"No wonder. Answer me this, my Lord Warden. How far is it hence to Branksome?"

"Ten miles."

"As long twelve as nag ever stepped over—and how far back again?"

"Why ten more to be sure."

"Exactly four and twenty. And yet this, for eight days have we done daily, and all for what? Why to catch once a glimpse of a French hood at a withdrawing room window, with the additional happiness of not being able to guess, from that day to this, who wore it."

"Mowbray, you would try the patience of a saint."

"In good truth you try mine. All this is folly."

"And if it were, a friend might pardon it."

"So a friend would, if he saw any chance of good coming of it."

"And yet there may."

"Impossible. The girl has refused you already. She will none of you."

"She may change her mind."

"Possibly—after your throat is cut. I have ever remarked that women have a tender appreciation of a man's excellences, when he is no longer able to profit by it."

"Out upon you, barbarian! Would you blaspheme the sex?"

"I blaspheme them! Not I. I should be right sorry to waste my breath on them. A pipe of Trinidado, and a stoup of Canary are worth all that ever wore kirtle."

"Mowbray, I will not have this. But you ever speak thus, when you are by me."

"It is sometimes well that I am by you. But for my four quarters, you might not at the present hour have spoken at all."

"Nay, I deny it not," said Buccleugh, in a gay tone, as if anxious to conciliate his companion, "do I not know you of old, man. Have I not seen your passato—and your imbrocato—your punto—and your reverso—your montanto—and your stoccato: and had

you not the pinking thrust, simply as strong as any man in Padua?"

"Nay—Wat, in this I compete not with you. The Signor Fulgentio ever said I was too heavy in the wrist for such subtleties."

"But your swashing blow, Frank."

"Ah! that," said his companion, with a grim smile, "serves me well enough. I took off Will Shaw's right hand as clean as could chirurgeon. I warrant me King Jamie's Vitruvius will never hold pencil or draw plan again. But come, shall we to horse, for I am well nigh weary."

"Not yet," said his companion, anxiously, "I prythee wait for a few moments."

"And then for Branksome. But when is this to end? Are we to come here day after day, and spend life in gazing at the grey walls opposite?"

"No—no—Mowbray, let me but see her once more. Give me but an opportunity of speaking to her again, and if a second time she say me nay, then——."

"Then, you will return, as you have returned now, to kiss her hand like a rated hound."

"Not so. On the contrary, I promise you to cut her out of my heart and forget that there is such a being in the world, as Mary Ker. But who goes there," said he, as he started to his feet, and pointed to the figure of a lady, who emerged from the wood which clothed the castle mound, and moved slowly across the little valley towards the river. "By heavens! Mowbray, it is she. I recognize her shape—her air—her dress. I must go speak with her." And he moved down the hill.

"Not a foot—not a yard," said his friend, as he seized him by the arm. "Are you weary of your life, Buccleugh, that you thus peril it so freely. Doubtless some of her brother's household are in her following, and we shall have the Horse Wynd tragedy enacted over again."

"They will not—they dare not. This is a royal residence, and Sir Robert himself,

had he fifty jackmen at his back, would not venture to use dagger, or draw brand. Within the precincts of the King's lodging, it is as much as his life is worth. But I have my bugle by my side, and will blow a note if need be. So, now, once more to try my fortune."

He hurried down the bank as he spoke. Mowbray watched his progress with an anxious eye.

"He is mad," muttered he to himself, "utterly mad; and when a fellow is demented, it is no use gainsaying him. But I trust the wench will stick to her former purpose; for if he married her, it would be the spoiling of a proper man. A young gallant like that, who can back horse and couch lance as well as his forefather, the Black Douglas, to go whining after a gill-flirt's apron strings! It must be glamourye—nothing but a glamourye could have done it. But i'faith, I had better untie the nags, and have them down to the river, for we may be obliged to ride for it. It's not the first

time that that wench's blue eyes have brought us into a jeopardy."

With the words, he proceeded in search of the horses; turning, however, from time to time to watch the progress of his companion, and accompanying each glance with a shake of the head, which expressed in the most eloquent manner, his compassion for his insanity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOWER.

ARE thy waters bright as of old, Beautiful Yarrow? Do the grey birches still dip their branches in thy stream? Years have gone by since I saw thee last, and I have looked on brighter skies, and greener hills, and nobler woods, than those which listen to thy music; but fair though were each and all, they dwell not in my memory, like thy banks and braes—my own loved river.

The spot to which Buccleugh directed his steps is one of the most picturesque in the south of Scotland. The Yarrow, which in the earlier part of its course, winds through open valleys, and presents frequently the appearance of a slug-

gish stream, becomes, as it approaches Newark, pent in by a closer approximation of the mountain ranges; and as it forces a path through the rocky barrier, makes its way to the ocean in alternate cataract and pool. On either side, the precipitous banks are clothed with birch and oak, while here and there a rocky cliff or flower-spangled mead, forces itself to the edge of the stream, and gives by turns to the landscape, the character of an Alpine solitude, or a miniature Arcadia.

It was in the midst of such scenery stood what was termed the Queen's Bower. It was built in the rudest fashion, of forest timber undivested of its bark, and was thatched with heath. Moss, lavishly introduced between the outer and the inner framework, secured it warmth; while hazel rods coated its interior, and by the fantastic patterns in which they were arranged, and the different colours of their bark, gave to the pannelling the character of a rude mosaic.

The summer house stood upon a little promontory of rock elevated some twenty feet above the river; and its windows looked down

upon a pool, whose black and sullen water presented a strange contrast to the headlong torrents which poured themselves into its upper portion, in masses of white foam.

The spot was approached from the Castle by a rustic bridge. It formed a favourite haunt of Mary Ker, and thither had she betaken herself after her interview with her nurse—glad, perchance, to relieve her feelings in the contemplation of a scene so beautiful.

"Yes," said she to herself as from her seat by the window of the sylvan dwelling she gazed upon the pool below, "Such is human life—a murmur—a fret—a struggle, and then to be lost for ever in some gulf like this—some abyss which apes eternity, and betrays no secret of those who once sink beneath its surface. And such a fate is like to be mine. In some such calm depth will end my life, and sometimes I would that that end were nearer. Young as I am, even now its sorrows have begun, and though I show not their sign on cheek or brow, how deeply have I already felt their influence. And then my two counsellors; both, I believe

wish well for my happiness, and yet how different their advice. Bitter as old Euphame is already, what would be her pangs if she guessed the truth—if she knew how unwillingly I sent him from my presence, or how often I have wept, that one with a thousand qualities calculated to win affection, should be so listless and unambitious. But such thoughts are idle," muttered she petulantly. "The words spoken in the garden at Cessford were well spoken, and I would repeat them were he here now,"

It almost seemed as if bodily existence had been given to her waking dreams, for a figure darkened the narrow door-way, and Buccleugh stood before her.

The conscious blood rushed to Mary's cheek, for she feared that her words had been listened to, and had suggested to her companion his appearance. The very thought of having betrayed her latent affection, produced, as was natural, the opposite sentiment, for she rose and with an air of great haughtiness exclaimed.

"The Lord Warden! To what am I indebted for this presumption?"

The young noble stood with hat in hand, and an air of respect so profound, as to have freed him in any eyes but Mary's from the charge.

"Madam," said he in a low tone, "I wish not to offend."

"Then wherefore are you here? When you forced yourself so unwarrantably into my father's garden at Cessford, did I not tell you that you were an intruder."

"I am an intruder every where, if my presence is disagreeable to Mistress Ker."

"Then why seek me thus? Why come where you know you are unwelcome."

"Why? Do you ask? Need you ask? Because I have lost all power over my will and my acts. Because I am attracted towards you by an invisible influence, which in spite of myself, brings me here, makes me kneel here, and worship you, as the idolators of old worshipped their idols, even when they feared that their divinity would lend no propitious ear to their prayers."

While yet speaking, the young man sank at her

feet, and gazed at her with an expression that spoke of affection, with an eloquence which uttered language would have failed to convey.

Mary retreated, at first, and seemed as if she would have spoken, but a moment elapsed, and still she spoke not. The deep respect of the attitude, the intense despair expressed in the countenance, perhaps, the grace and manly beauty of her lover—for where is the woman, philosopher enough not to feel their influence?—all combined to have their effect upon the young girl's feelings. Gradually the eye lost its anger, the lip its haughtiness, and it was in a tone, which, though still decided, was courteous, if not kind that she said.

"This is madness, my Lord Warden. This is insanity. Nay, nay," continued she, as he was about to make a passionate reply, "I can guess what you would say, but I will not listen to you. Nor is it necessary. I am willing to believe that what you have uttered now, and in the garden of Cessford is the truth, and that you love me. The more bitterly do I regret that it

should be so, for I have but to say again, what I said before, that the affection is one which, on my part, can meet with no return."

"And yet it may," said her suitor passionately. "I do not expect—I did not even dare to hope that it might, now. But still the time may come when you will think more favourably of my pretensions."

"Never!"

"Never!" repeated he, "and you utter it in a tone that implies you have reasons for the decision."

Mary said nothing.

"You answer not? Have I then chanced upon a truth?"

Still there was no reply.

"Nay, then, it must be so. Is it the feudal hate that has so long separated our families? But no, that is impossible A being so generous as you are, would not visit upon me the sins of our fathers."

The girl made a sign of dissent.

"It is not that. Then what may it be? Ah Mary—dear Mary!" said he, as he seized her

hand, and retained it against her will, "I do not ask you for your love if I have not deserved it. But, at least, say this—in mercy tell me the cause of your indifference. It would be a relief to a broken heart to know by what error I have lost the prize I sought for."

Mary looked at him long, and changing feelings passed rapidly over her brow. There was something, however, in the young man's expression, that seemed to disarm her, for she spoke at length.

"I doubt, Sir Walter," said she, "if I am acting in this matter in the fashion which my elders might approve: but if it be, that in what I say I utter anything that savours of discourtesy, remember, that it is at your own request I speak, and excuse the frankness of the language in the feeling that dictates it. You tell me of your errors. Had I deplored them, you might have answered me; for a man's errors are his acts, and his acts, if he will, he can control. But the fault lies deeper. If I marry, the man whom I wed must be the object not merely of my love, but of my admiration.

What claim have you to the distinction? You are the descendant of the great Douglasses. Have you emulated them? Where is their energy, their hardihood, their ambition? Pardon me for saying that these are qualities that nature has denied you, and what God has not given, man cannot supply."

"And is this all?" said the young noble, as he raised his eager eyes with the glance of hope. "Am I condemned merely for deficiencies like these! Ah, little do you know how deep a current may run beneath a smooth surface. Give me but the hope, and I promise you, that there is no position, however lofty, to which I will not aspire, and aspire successfully, if the success win for me the chance of making you my bride."

Scarcely were the words uttered, than a discordant laugh was heard from the door of the bower. Buccleugh sprang to his feet and turning round, discovered Euphame.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" said the old woman, as she continued her insolent merriment. "My Lord Warden on his knees. A Scott at the

feet of the Kers. Marry come up, but they know their place well:" and a second laugh, even more insolent than the first, gave additional venom to her language.

The young noble answered her not. From the moment he recognised her, he had apparently become unconscious of her presence, and once more, as if there had been no third person present, he sank upon one knee, and touched respectfully with his lips, the young girl's fingers.

"Yes, Mary," said he, "I have the energy, the ambition you prize so highly. Will you not give me an object for their exercise? Will you not promise, if they be successful, to become my wife?"

"Your wife!" broke in Euphame, who, from the moment of her intrusion, had been struggling with her fierce nature. "Your wife, indeed! Boy—that is a question which should have been asked not of her but of me: for she has plighted her word, that my presence shall give the sanction to her bridal. From me then, take the answer," and the old woman drew herself up to her full

height, in the attitude of one who pronounced a malediction. "Baron of Branksome, chief of an accursed race, the swords of your people have made our children fatherless, and our hearths desolate, and now, with the blood of our kinsmen on your hands, you would seek this girl, the flower of our maidens, for your bride. That shall she never be. But no—no—no—" continued she, with a shriek of derisive laughter. "I will do all honour to the pretensions of so great a noble. You may come a wooing, and I promise you success, when we are to you as bondswomen, and she and I are kneeling at your feet."

Eye flashed—lip curled—hand trembled as she spoke, but the taunts elicited for awhile no reply. The blood flushed, indeed, Buccleugh's cheek and brow, but beyond this, there was no evidence that the words reached his ears, and with his eyes fixed upon the girl, and with her hand grasped in his, he continued to gaze on her, as if from her and her alone, he would consent to receive his answer.

"Mary," said he at length, "you will surely not listen to her? You will listen only to the kind emotions of your own generous nature, and not to the ravings of that doting maniac."

The phrase was an unhappy one. Passionately attached to her nurse, the fair daughter of Cessford was ever disposed to give more than full weight to her counsels. What might have been Buccleugh's fate had he been left to plead his cause uninterrupted is difficult to tell, but from the moment of the old woman's entrance, the favourable impression which he had made upon his lady-love rapidly declined, and in its place Euphame's influence resumed its wonted ascendancy. With the increasing affection, came of course, proportionate anger at the contemptuous language used regarding her.

"You forget yourself strangely, Lord Warden," said Mary. "Euphame Cranstoun is a kinswoman of our house."

"Madam, pardon me for saying it is she who forgets herself. No kinswoman of your house, should have used such language."

"And yet she might have been pardoned. How many near and dear to her has she lost in these broils, first called into existence by the mad folly of your ancestor."

Had the taunt been addressed to himself, Buccleugh might have borne it; but like a true Scotchman, sarcasms levelled at his family, or his clan, were too much for his philosophy. He rose to his feet.

"Madam," said he in a tone which did not conceal its irritation, "whatever might have been the errors of my grandsire, he, at least, struck his foes in the open field, and beneath the light of day. Pity, that his chivalry met so poor a return."

"You would allege ——"

"I allege nothing. Broad as the confines of the kingdom, is it known that he fell in the streets of Edinburgh, at midnight, by the dagger of a murderer: and none can tell better, than she whom you are so proud of recognising as a relative, whose hand it was that struck the blow."

"You forget, Sir, that if her forefather was present, so also was mine. You would not charge him with the treachery. You dare not. My house is the soul of honour."

"Witness it," said Buccleugh in a tone of intense bitterness, "young Ancrum's blood."

The words were spoken hastily; but they were not on that account the less deeply felt, for, the girl staggered as if under the effect of a heavy blow, and laid her hand upon the wall of the rustic pavilion, as if for support.

"What!" said she, as soon as her pale and trembling lips had recovered the power to articulate. "Because my brother struck down a jealous interloper in his rights, would you brand him as an assassin. This is insolent. This is too insolent. Begone, Sir. Nay," continued she as the young nobleman would have spoken, "would you have the effrontery to renew your addresses? Not a word—not a syllable. I reject them, I tell you. I loathe them."

Buccleugh's eyes flashed, his lips compressed themselves, and for a moment it seemed as if he

would have retorted in language as violent as that which had been addressed to him, but probably the sex of his companion came upon his memory, for his expression suddenly calmed, and though his clenched teeth and knit brow bore evidence to the violence of the feelings which agitated him, it was in a low and cold tone that he, at length, addressed her.

"Madam," said he, in words that each after each fell upon the ear as distinct as drops of water, "your fears are unnecessary. My day of death may come and must come, but be it soon or late, it will come before these loathsome addresses of mine vex your ear again. "What! you doubt?" continued he, as something like a smile played upon the girl's lip. "By heavens! I speak the truth. I swear it to you as true knight—as noble gentleman. As for you," continued he, addressing Euphame, "you, to whom age should have taught charity, but who have made of hate a religion, I leave you to await Heaven's just time. You have dashed the cup of happiness from my lips. See that it fall not

from your own. The hour may come when you, too, like me, may pray for mercy, and pray in vain. And, now madam," said he once more addressing Mary, "I bid you, and for the last time, farewell."

He turned as he spoke, and was soon lost among the copse wood.

For a minute not a word was uttered. It might be that the old woman felt the influence of the prediction spoken at parting, for her face lost its usual haughty character, and as for Mary, she appeared overpowered by the struggle of contending emotions. Euphame was the first to recover her self-possession.

"Brave girl!" exclaimed she in a tone of affected joyousness, "how I honour you. He has gone, at last, and for ever. But you do not laugh—you do not smile. What ails you?" and as if to give emphasis to her words she laid her fingers on the arm of her ward, who still continued gazing intently at the spot where the young noble had disappeared. But her touch was repulsed petulantly, and Mary hastily avert-

ing her head, leant against the pannelled wall. What were her thoughts, it would be difficult to guess; but at intervals a low sob, and a convulsive movement of the shoulders. showed that she wept.

Did she regret?

CHAPTER XVII.

MINCH MOOR.

BUCCLEUGH had, in the meantime, recrossed the bridge, and moved at a slow pace towards the Fairy hill. Scarcely had he cleared the cover formed by the branches of the forest timber that fringed the river's bank, than Mowbray, leading the spare horse by his side, galloped up to him.

"Well," said he, in a gay tone. "What news? But I need not ask," continued he, as he observed the gloomy expression of his companion. "It is now as it has been heretofore."

"No, Mowbray," said the Warden, in a grave

tone. "You are wrong. It is not now as it has been heretofore. I have bidden Mistress Ker adieu, and for ever."

"Tush! man, it is but a vow made to be broken. I have remarked that same 'ever' in a lover's mouth, is a marvellous short specimen of eternity."

"Gibe as you will. I have stated but the truth. I have pledged my word to her, and I now pledge it to you as true knight, that I will never ask her hand again."

"Are you serious?"

"Never more so. She has refused me, Frank. That, you have already guessed, but were you to guess till the day of doom, you never would guess in what words of bitter contumely the refusal was conveyed. Had I been the meanest hind, without name—without parentage—without wealth, she could not have employed terms more contemptuous and unmannerly."

"Say you so, indeed," said his companion, with a face of stupid wonder. "Well, it may be so. But I suppose it is the nature of the

sex. I have ever remarked that a jer-falcon is never to be depended on. Your jerkin or your tassel-gentle you can do with what you will. But your jer-falcon! Whew! Take her as Eyess, or as Brancher—give her her castings—enter her to the lure—mew her—man her—reclaim her—its all the same thing. She stoops, or flies a rake, just as the whim seizes her."

And Mowbray concluded what was for him an oration, by a prolonged shake of the head, intended to express, in the most energetic form, his reprobation of female delinquency.

A faint smile came across the Lord Warden's face, but he said nothing.

"And when," returned his companion, "do we go back to Branksome?"

"I go not there at all," was the decided reply. "To tell you the truth, Frank, I have no wish to expose myself to the curious eyes, and the gossiping of my domestics."

"And where intend you for?"

"For Linlithgow."

"Nay, we could scarce go to a better place. Your cousin, King Jamie, has got some rare

wine in his cellars, and I doubt not, if ye spoke him fair, I might be bidden to the tasting of it."

"Well, Frank," said the good-tempered young noble, with a smile. "I had not contemplated your joining me. But if you wish it, it shall be so; and I dare to say that my influence may procure you a sip of the royal liquor. So back with you to Branksome, and get some of my people together, and come on with them to Linlithgow."

"Back with me to Branksome!" said his companion, in astonishment. "Said you not that I was to accompany you?"

"Not now, I am in a humour at present to commune with no thoughts but my own, and will precede you."

"And alone?"

"Yes—alone."

"Why, 'tis madness. They say the roads are not over chancy. It was but yesterday I heard whispered in hall, that there were three or four Bezonians abroad."

"Pshaw! We are in Scotland, not in Italy."

"What of that? None should know better than a Warden of the Marches, that there are fellows here, who are as ready to clap a whinger to your throat and cry, after their fashion, "*Ho bisogno!*" as any of old Leyva's Spanish cut-throats ever did in the Milanese."

"I will risk it; and to tell you the truth," continued the Lord Warden, with a melancholy smile, "at the present moment, I should be grateful to any rascal, who, by thrust or bullet, would send me out of a world of which I am well weary."

Frank Mowbray made no further effort to change his purpose, and after a glance of honest commiseration, in compliance with his friend's instructions, turned his horse's head southward.

Buccleugh steadily watched his progress till he was out of sight. He then, in his turn, put foot in stirrup and mounted. For some two or three minutes he sat motionless in the saddle, his eyes fixed upon the little building which had been the scene of his conference with his lady-

love, and whose thatched roof, peeped forth from among the trees on the opposite bank of the river.

"It is over," said he, at length, "and so is ended one of the dreams of my life. Well! she has scorned me, and I wish her no evil: but she may live to learn, that he whom she has refused, had better stuff in him than she dreamed of. I would peril life and lands to prove it; for I should die happy, did I know she would regret."

With the words, he touched his horse with the spur, and proceeded on his journey.

For awhile the road was one of singular beauty, for it led along the level ground on the side of the river, beneath the trees of the primeval forest of Black Andrew. But as Buccleugh crossed the stream, at the village of Yarrowford, and took his way up the mountain range, following the line of the high North Road—if such a term could be legitimately applied to the steep and stony track, which then as now, crossed Minch Moor—the scene changed. The magnificent oak and beech,

which had clothed the rich bottoms of the valley, and the lower slopes of the mountain, gradually disappeared, and their place was ill supplied by Scotch firs and birch. These, too, in their turn, gave way to hazel and bushes of stunted hawthorn, till, at length, the traveller emerged upon the open heath. As he proceeded, the landscape became more and more wild, and no living thing met the eye, except from time to time, some startled moor-cock, which whirred from its covert, and with a loud and angry note, seemed to complain of the invasion of its solitude.

After an ascent of about four miles, the Lord Warden approached the highest point of the range.

Minch Moor separates the waters of the Tweed from those of the Yarrow, and like the *Biceps Parnassus* has a double top. The two summits are connected by a low and narrow ridge, whose turfy sides sink down almost perpendicularly, till they terminate in deep glens—the basins of tiny tributaries, of one or other river.

The first of these summits, had been nearly reached by Buccleugh, when he was startled by the report of fire-arms. He struck his horse with the spur, and a gallop of a few yards enabled him to perceive its cause.

In the hollow beneath, and at the lowest part of the pass, by the side of a roofless hut, probably, in early times, intended as a place of rest for the way-farer—were four men engaged in desperate combat. One of them was, apparently, a traveller, for a horse, saddled and bridled, ran loose near him. The other three, by the coarseness of their dress, were evidently ruffians. In numbers, the contending parties were unequally matched, but still the Cavalier in the Spanish beaver, defended himself gallantly. He had placed his back against the wall of the ruined building, and with his dagger in his left hand, and a long rapier in his right, contrived to keep his assailants at bay.

The young Warden did not lose a moment, for putting spurs to his horse, he galloped fiercely down the hill, shouting at intervals, so as to make those below aware of his approach.

A few minutes sufficed to place him on the scene of action. He did not arrive too soon. As he approached, the traveller, whose attention had been occupied by two of his enemies in front, was struck by a third, in the left shoulder, with a dagger. The disabled arm sank by his side, and he would soon have become an easy prey, when the arrival of Buccleugh changed the face of affairs. Drawing a pistol from his holster, he was fortunate enough, at the first shot, to break the arm of the principal assailant, and riding his horse against a second, prepared to use his hunting sword, with the power and address of one, who was well acquainted with the weapon.

The ruffians did not wait his approach; for, seizing their wounded comrade, they hurried him to the edge of the bank, and seating him and themselves upon the turf, slid down the nearly precipitous side of the ravine, and were soon beyond pursuit.

Buccleugh made no attempt to follow them.

"By my honour, fair Sir," said he, "you handle sword and dagger well. Are you hurt?

But I need scarcely ask," continued he, as he remarked the blood oozing through the dress. "One of the villains has struck you."

"Nay—it is no great matter," said our friend the Italian—for he was the unfortunate wayfarer. "Rip me up the sleeve with your poignard, and complete your good deeds by binding up the wound. The bleeding, else, will make me lose my head."

The Lord Warden delayed not a moment. Fastening his horse to the door-post of the ruined house, he followed the instructions which were addressed to him, and in a few minutes, by applying a coarse bandage, succeeded in stopping the blood.

"And now," said the wounded man "the sooner we move the better, for in a couple of hours the limb will have stiffened, and I may not be so well fitted for a journey. Might I ask of you (if indeed it be possible) to catch my horse."

Fortunately the matter was one attained with less trouble than had been anticipated. The animal had been attracted by the steed of the

Lord Warden and was easily secured. With a little difficulty, the Italian was placed upon its back, and the new allies proceeded on their journey.

Some three miles further brought them to the foot of the range, and the village of Traquair. But there an alteration was required in their arrangements. Loss of blood had caused so much feebleness in the Signor Octavio, that he was unable to keep the saddle, and as his increasing debility suggested probable danger, a cart was hired from a farmer in the little hamlet. This was filled with straw, and Buccleugh taking the rein of the Italian's horse, with a whispered request from his master, not to lose sight of the saddle bags—the party continued their route to the town of Peebles, scarce five miles distant. There the Galen of the place was summoned, the wound examined and dressed, and with the intimation, that though it was not dangerous, a week's repose would be necessary—the sick man was sent to bed.

But it is necessary to account for the appearance of the Italian.

On the night on which he had been fortunate enough to arrest the progress of Lord Scrope's horsemen at the ford of the Irthing, he and the moss-trooper had succeeded in reaching the Scotch Border without further adventure—and on the following day had arrived at the little town of Hawick. There Willie had left him for the purpose of delivering the Bishop's despatches to his chief at Cessford, and the Signor Octavio was compelled to pursue the remainder of his journey alone.

It was fated to be a dangerous one. The young Borderer's gratitude had tempted him to speak largely of the generosity of his new acquaintance, and three of the ruffians of the road, so common at the period, determined to appropriate a purse reported to be so well stored. It had originally been their intention to have made the attack on the following morning; but the scheme failed, for the Italian had accidentally joined himself to some travellers on their way to Selkirk, and as the number of the party made

attack dangerous, the clerks of St. Nicholas decided, at length, on preceding their intended victim, and awaiting his arrival in a solitude where there would be none likely to mar their plans.

For this purpose they had taken up an ambush behind the dilapidated ale-house. Everything seemed to promise them success, for the Signor Octavio, unconscious of danger, had quitted the saddle, and led his horse down the steep, and it was only when he was within a few yards of the ruin, that he became aware of his peril, by the robbers rushing out from their concealment, and firing the shot which had attracted the attention of the Lord Warden.

Though it had missed its mark, it had been indifferently well aimed, for the ball passed through the upper part of the Italian's hat. What was worse still, the report startled the horse, and the terrified animal drawing back suddenly, forced the rein from his master's hand. Ere he was able to recover it, the ruffians were upon him, and he had just time to place his back against the wall. With the aid of its

shelter, he had for awhile gallantly maintained his position. But even all the efforts of his practised hand would have been useless, had not the providential arrival of Buccleugh restored him once more to hope and life.

The wound he had received, though, as we have already mentioned, not dangerous, proved sufficiently severe to verify the predictions of his medical attendant, and for some days he was confined to his bed, nursed by his professional adviser; and also, strange to say, by Buccleugh.

Irritated, petulant, without object, the young nobleman had gladly devoted himself to an occupation which weaned his thoughts from painful recollections. Besides, there were other reasons, to be mentioned afterwards, which chained him to the bedside of the invalid. For the present, it is sufficient to note that when, on the sixth day after the accident, the Italian was so far convalescent as to be able to put foot in stirrup, the Lord Warden was still his companion. It had originally been the intention of Signor Octavio to proceed to Edinburgh, but upon

hearing that the Court had removed to Linlithgow, he changed his plans, and contenting himself with dispatching a man on horseback with a letter to the Scottish metropolis, he himself, in company with his new friend, started for the feudal stronghold which was the present residence of James and of his Queen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ENGLISH AMBASSADOR.

We must precede our travellers, and change the scene to the residence of the Court.

About sixteen miles west of Edinburgh stands the fairest of the royal residences of Scotland—the palace of Linlithgow. It was, and is, for Time has laid his hand gently on the massive masonry, a large square embattled building, entered by a gateway, and with a tower at each angle, but otherwise without exterior ornament. The interior was more deserving of remark. In the centre of the court-yard, round which were ranged the principal buildings, stood a fountain carved in the richest

style of Gothic architecture; while at the four angles were spiral staircases leading to the royal apartments, and these were decorated with a richness and delicacy of taste and workmanship which formed a strange contrast to the rudeness of the outer walls.

Alike removed from the turbulence of the citizens of Edinburgh, which made a residence in the capital, painful to the pride, and dangerous to the safety of the sovereign; and free from the inconveniences, concomitant with the limited accommodation of the castle of Stirling—their refuge in times of rebellion and civil war—Linlithgow was to the Stuarts, what Windsor and Chambord were to the Tudors and the house of Valois—a spot where the cares of royalty were thrown aside; a spot associated with joust and tournament, dance and festival.

The favourite residence of the Scottish kings was not undeserving their partiality. Independently of the grandeur ever suggested by a large and noble feudal residence, the beauty of the surrounding country was remarkable, the

climate mild, the air smelt sweet and wooingly.

To the north, and almost bathing the Castle with its waters, was a beautiful lake, and on its further side, and indeed all round, extended the chase or royal park, alternating in forest or down, as the inequalities of the ground gave, or denied shelter.

To the south, and immediately under the exterior walls of the fortress, was the town or village of Linlithgow. On its "Grande Place," as it would have been termed abroad, opened the great gateway of the royal chateau, while at one of its angles was the cathedral-like Church of St. Michael's, with its lofty spire and flying buttresses—the scene of the mysterious warning, which had heralded to the fourth James the battle of Flodden and his death. In the centre of the square stood a massive and lofty fountain of ornamented stone work, while to the south, and parallel with the southern front of the palace, ran a long straggling street, the sole thoroughfare of the courtly and court-loving inhabitants.

It is to this street, that we have now to conduct the reader.

At its west end, and on its southern side, may still be seen a quaint old house, built after the Flemish fashion; with steep roofs, bold gables, carved stone-work, and all that variety of tracery and external ornament which marks the domestic architecture of the Low Countries. For Flanders was to the inhabitants of Scotland what Greece was to the Old World, the parent source, from which was derived their taste for the fine arts, in whatever shape taste might display itself, — in their buildings,—their pictures, — their furniture,—the fashions of their plate, their jewellery, and their dress.

It was on the fourth day after the events narrated in the last chapter, and about ten in the morning. On a stone bench in front of the mansion in question, lounged eight or ten yeomen, whose broad shoulders and bluff jolly countenances, formed a marked contrast to the care-worn visages and attenuated forms of the town's folks, and left no doubt as to their being from the southern part of the Island; while their

blue coats, with silver badge on shoulder, rich in heraldic blazonries, as distinctly announced them to be the retainers of some great noble, or distinguished personage. Grooms too, mounted upon fine horses came and went ; while ever and anon appeared and disappeared a figure clothed in black velvet-doublet and hose, and with a gold chain passed round his neck —the Major Domo of the establishment.

In the principal apartment of the building, in one of the large high-backed chairs of the period, and wrapped in a gown of damask, sat our old friend Sir Robert Bowes. He was alone, and apparently ill at ease, for his features were impressed with deep melancholy.

" Yes," said he, " Essex is in the Tower, and so ends my vision of King Robert— so vanishes once more my hope of greatness. We build ill, when any part of the construction of our edifice is dependant on another. We may trace plans worthy of Vitruvius, we may provide bricks and mortar, durable as those of the baths of Dioclesian, yet after all, if our master work-man choose to ruin every thing to gratify

some whim, how useless our labours. I bound myself to this young man's chariot wheels;—I fancied him one marked out for greatness; for he had birth, wealth, courage, beauty—all that men praise and women worship; and yet all useless, ruined by the very brilliancy of his early success. And now he is in the Lion's Den, and that hunch-back Cecil will take care that he never leave it with life. And yet, how near he was succeeding. Had he been guided by me, but a few years would have seen him beyond the reach of fate, King of England. 'The day of Cadiz' had given him the army — his liberality had won the populace—his beauty, like that of the fourth Edward, had charmed the dames of the city—and his descent from Edmond of Woodstock and the Boleyns, attesting alike the blood of the Plantagenets, and his relationship to the Queen, marked him out for her successor; and I, who have talents equal to any, who have courage equal to any, who have ambition equal to any, I, who by the jealousy of the Cecils, have drivelled away existence, the paltry Ambassador to a paltry

Court, would have cast my slough, and become the Viceroy of a new monarch, and the master of a new kingdom. It was a glorious vision, and all ruined by a young man's folly."

There was a pause for a while, and the moraliser upon the vanity of human greatness fixed his eyes upon the embers of the hearth, as though he would have read some hope of a brighter future in the fitful flickerings of their flame.

"Well," continued he, after a while, "I must do my best for my own safety, for Cecil will, no doubt, be hot upon the scent; but I trust I am beyond his reach. That secret journey to Streatlam was well planned, and well executed, and every scrape of a pen, every paper, every document that bound me to Lord Robert has been committed to the flames, and not an evidence exists that I lent myself to his ambition. Ha!" said he, as he started suddenly, "I had forgotten. That accursed letter which, in a moment of unhappy confidence, I wrote to him, still exists, and, if found, may cost me my head. But it was but a few lines,

—but a few lines," repeated he, "and I trust will escape the quest of Cecil's beagles. But what's become of Fowler? I would fain learn how that pedantic ass, King Jamie, has borne my absence. Ha! there is a step upon the stairs. He comes at last."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when the door opened, and a man entered the room. He was about thirty, and richly, yet quietly dressed. The eye was keen, the step cat-like, the expression that of one anxiously alive to his personal interests, the manner that of a man who had lived constantly with his superiors, and who, in the practice of a perpetual deference of look and word and gesture, had abnegated all right to the exercise of personal volition. On entering the room, however, the veil which habit had cast over the features seemed to be thrown aside, and it was with an expression of hearty joyousness that he approached the English Ambassador.

"Good-morning, Sir Robert," said he. "I am happy to welcome your Excellency back from Streatlam."

"Hush, Tom, hush," said Bowes; "walls have ears. And now for the news. Has any one suspected my absence?"

"None. King—Queen—Court—every one, imagined you ill at your lodgings at Edinburgh; and your major-domo, Davidson, answered all inquiries on the subject with a face so mournful, that the most hardened unbeliever would have been satisfied that you were at death's door."

"Ah! ha!" said Bowes, laughing, "the old rogue is like yourself, Fowler—a sort of Nick Machiavel in little. An Ambassador's factotum should, like his master, be an actor, and would be useless unless he could top his part. But the news, I say, the news—what's going on at Court? Yet I need scarce ask; all the world, no doubt, talking of the arrest of Lord Robert!"

"Not a bit of it," said Fowler, laughing. "We have been too busy to attend to such matters."

"Pooh! you are joking. James's eventual succession to the English crown hinges on it, and the King—"

"Has, for the last week, been heart and soul employed in trying some new Norway gos-hawks."

"And the Queen—"

"Has invented a dance, and all the world has been practising it. My ancles are positively stiff from perpetual capering."

"And the Court—?"

"Busy with the last scandal. The Laird of Logie was found kissing Mistress Margaret Twinslace."

"The Danish waiting-woman?"

"Exactly."

"Well, there was not much field for remark in that. Young girls, I suppose, are kissed in town as in country."

"Yes. But Margaret was the Queen's tyring-woman."

"What has that to do with the matter?"

"Everything. It connected the affair with the Court, and the Edinburgh Ministers took it up."

"My ally of the Tolbooth, Wat Balcanquhal for a ducat."

"The very man. He wished to play John Knox at second-hand, and inaugurate a new Reformation: so he opened a communication with his Majesty, and demanded—"

"What?"

"Guess."

"Nay, I give it up. It is beyond the power of human imagination to divine the amount of assurance of an Edinburgh Minister. What was the demand?"

"That our fair friend Margaret should be put on the cuttie-stool."

"How? A Queen's tyring-woman, in a white sheet, standing on the stool of repentance during divine service. Moderate, positively moderate."

"The King, at least, did not think so."

"Why, what said he?"

"That, it was impossible to guess, for, between his rage and his spluttering (you know the size of his tongue), not a word was intelligible."

"And the Queen?"

"She was furious too. But, fortunately,

she could speak distinctly, and she refused her consent."

"Probable enough," said Bowes, drily. "If all stories be true, her Majesty might find the general establishment of the penalty inconvenient. And what did my reverend and occasionally very useful and very unscrupulous friend the Minister of the Tolbooth?"

"Acted decidedly, as is his wont—excommunicated young Logie and Mistress Margaret, on the following Sunday, from the pulpit; and completed his Christian duties by preaching for four hours and a half against the vices of the Court."

"Faith, Tom, that was hardly fair. It was punishing the burghers of Auld Reekie for the sins of their superiors."

"In good sooth, neither the burghers nor their superiors had any reason to congratulate themselves. In part *seventeenthly* of the heart-rending discourse, the eloquent divine called his Majesty an Ahab and the Queen a Jezabel, and, for the further edification of his audience, concluded by proving from St. Paul

that 'kissing' ensured to the offending parties perdition in this world and the next."

"Sharp doctrine, Tom," said the Ambassador, laughing.

"Faith, if the parson were right, the matter was getting serious; more especially for the ladies, so they took it up warmly."

"And what did my fair Calvinistic friends make of it."

"Nothing but a squabble. There was a complete schism in the camp. One half took one way, and the other the other."

"How was that?"

"Why, the aged dames—those who had passed their grand climacteric—held, for the most part, with the Minister, and denounced lip-service as damnable; while the younger—"

"Zounds! the jades were not brazen-faced enough to insist on the necessity of osculation."

"Oh, no! they only insisted that their seniors were wrong."

"Humph. To me it seems to mean much

the same thing. And so I shall find them all by the ears?"

"Oh, no! On one point they were unanimous. All were indignant with Mistress Margaret for being—found out."

"Well! some good sense in that. As our friend Will, or toping Ben rhymes it,

> 'To be taken—to be seen,
> This hath sin accounted been.'

But what said King Jamie to the scurrility of his reverend subject?"

"As soon as he had got his tongue in order, and could speak intelligibly, he went down to the Cross here, and pronounced an oration, as he calls it, on the iniquities of Walter Balcanquhal, nearly as long as Wat's own sermon."

"The madman! Has he forgotten that these orations upon the insolence of his clergy have already nearly cost him his life?"

"Ay, but that was in Edinburgh. We are all loyal here. There is not a butcher or baker in the place but has his daily gossip with

royalty. At Edinburgh, however, it might have been different, and to Edinburgh we were to have gone next day (for James would risk crown and kingdom, rather than lose an opportunity of delivering an harangue), when, by good luck, it turned out otherwise."

"And to what propitious deity were you indebted for your safety?"

"Why, the honour was divided. The hart we turned out of the brake that afternoon, proved a stag of ten. The old fellow was too fat to run, so he stuck his tail against the first tree, held us at bay, and carried off the *spolia opima*, as our friend Jamie would have said, after breaking Help's leg, and goring Hold's shoulder; and for further fortune, there came that night a runlet of Canary from the Duke of Chatelheraut, and so—"

"As the dogs were bad, and the wine good, you stayed where you were?"

"Precisely. And we have done little but nurse the hounds, and drink the liquor ever since."

"And these are your Heaven-descended kings!" said Bowes, in a tone of intense contempt, "these their sports and springs of action! Can you wonder, Fowler, that men begin to whisper doubts of the divinity of their would-be idols?"

"Hush—hush! Such words are dangerous."

"They are dangerous, now. Did my gracious mistress Queen Bess wot of them, gyves to the wrists, and headsman to the neck, would be the least of it. But mark me. The days come, and you will live to see them, when words such as these, ay, bolder, fiercer, will be spoken, at church and market, in lane and thoroughfare, and with all men's approbation; and these, our gods of brass and clay, will be hurled from their high places, and trampled under foot."

"Nay, nay," said Fowler, with a forced laugh, as if alarmed at his patron's language, and anxious to divert his thoughts. "You forget your vocation, Sir Robert. Ambassadors

were intended to be the apologists of Kings, not their censors."

The remonstrance, or the tone in which it was conveyed, seemed to have weight, for the features of the English envoy resumed their satirical expression, and in his usual bantering tone he replied:

"You are right, Tom; and I am wrong in condemning the follies which give me power. But if the Court has been occupied by matters of such moment, I suppose my absence has been scarcely remarked."

"It may be painful to your Excellency's vanity to confess the truth, but the fact is, till this morning, we had forgotten your existence."

And to what am I indebted," said Bowes, with a sneer, "for living once more in the recollection of my friends?"

"Oh! the old reason. The King wants money."

"And he trusts to me to supply him?"

"Of course. As your friend Sir Walter would say, you are his Eldorado."

"The spendthrift profligate! Twenty Eldorados, could Raleigh discover them, and all the gold of Peru and Mexico to boot, would not last him a month. But, news, man, I want news. I supply you with funds, as well as King Jamie, and what is the use of all your intelligencers in town or in country, if you glean for me nothing?"

"Your Excellency does me injustice; I spoke but of the Court; from the country I have news."

"Important?"

"That depends upon opinion. There are people in the world," added he, with a sly smile, "who allege that your Excellency will deem them so."

"Well, open your budget, Tom. Out with them."

"Mistress Mary Ker."

"Hah!" said Bowes, half starting from his seat, and with an agitation he in vain attempted to conceal. "What of her?"

"She had an admirer."

"She has a thousand!"

"Ay. But this was no common one."

"His name, man?"

"The Lord Warden."

"Buccleugh?"

Fowler nodded.

"Well, speak. Out with it. Tell me if she has accepted him."

"No. Your Excellency, she has refused."

Bowes drew a long breath, and then, as if unable to control his emotion, buried his face in his hands.

There was silence for some minutes. Sir Robert still retained his half-recumbent attitude, and Fowler watched his patron with his keen grey eye. The glance, however, had lost its usual sneering character, and the expression was one of sympathy and respect.

"Yes," said Bowes, at length, as he once more threw himself back in his chair, "I conceal nothing from you, my friend, for you are the only one on earth to whom I reveal my hopes, my wishes, my fears."

"And why should you not do so?" said his companion. "To use the expression of

the country, 'Blood is thicker than water,' and though a distant relative, am I not of your own house? And do I not owe you everything? It is just ten years ago that you introduced me, a stranger, to James's notice; you assisted me to gain his confidence; you have made me what I am. I was poor; and I am now rich. I was a raw boy, without manners, position, or influence; and now I am necessary to both sides of the Border; the favourite of James, and the most trusted spy of the Cecils."

"True, Tom," said Bowes, with a half-smile, "I have done all this, and the wise ones of the earth would say that I had done foolishly; for I have made you independent of me."

"The adage of your Excellency might be correct, if I were satisfied with my lot."

"And are you not so?"

"No; and, therefore, you may trust me still; for I am grateful for favours yet to come. Your Excellency aspires to be the future Minister of England, and I hope as devoutly as yourself the success of the aspiration."

"In the expectation, no doubt, that when I become the future Burleigh of some future sovereign, the name of Thomas Fowler may be found in the list of England's future Treasurers, or future Secretaries."

Fowler smiled.

"Well, for that reason, and perchance for my belief in the proverb you quoted, I will trust you. And so—" and there was a pause for a minute, as if the subject that occupied his thoughts was painful to him. "And so," continued he at length, as if with an effort, "Mistress Mary Ker"—

"Refused the Lord Warden,"

"Are you well assured of that?"

"I have it on good evidence, that she not only refused him, but in language so insolent and contumelious, that Buccleugh swore that to the day of his death he would never ask her again."

Once more, it might be to veil his features, Bowes bent forward in his chair.

"It is of no use, my friend and kinsman," said he at length, "attempting to conceal it

from you. I love that girl, love her passionately, madly. I have struggled against the weakness, I have argued with my own mind against it. A thousand times have I cursed myself for my folly, but it avails not; my love lives still."

"Yet if beauty be an excuse, you have it, for she is beautiful."

"She is: but it was not her beauty that bound me to her. I have seen coral lips and rosy cheeks too often, to view them with anything but indifference."

"What then attached you,"

"Sympathy."

"Sympathy!" said Fowler, in a tone, that made no effort to conceal his astonishment.

"Yes, sympathy. Do you doubt its existence or its power?"

"I doubt neither, but she is young, and you—"

"And I, you would say, am old, and have neither face nor form, cheek nor lip to attract. You are right. But you forget that human beings have two elements—the outward and

the inward man; and in this they differ. The outward man changes. As years pass on, its beauty passes with the years; and we seek in vain in its autumn for the charms that wooed us in its spring, for who can recognize the semblance of the bud in the half-withered rose. It is not so with the inner man. Where there has once existed a passion for things great and noble; where there has been once felt a contempt for the every-day occupations and pleasures of humanity—the tastes change not. The pursuits of later life may be different, but the spirit that animates them is the same; and thus, Intelligence in its age, is coloured with the same tints, and embodied in the same features, that gave the charm to its youth."

"It may be so, but how would you apply this?"

"Are you so dull? Or need you ask?"

"To Mistress Mary Ker?"

"Yes, to her."

"Yet, pardon me for saying, that in those very qualities, which are considered most at-

tractive in youth, she is without a rival. Whose robes are more tasteful? Whose figure floats so lightly in the dance? Whose tapestry-work produces a result so like nature?"

"All true, yet it is not in the possession of accomplishments, but in the object we have held out to ourselves in acquiring them, that consists the difference between a great mind and a little one. Mistress Ker may have the qualities you speak of; but in her secret heart, she cares neither for the triumphs of the dance, nor of the tapestry. Her thoughts are elsewhere. She has other objects."

"Of what thinks she then?"

"Of that which forms the sympathy between her and me. She is young, and I am old, but our hearts both beat in response to one common aspiration."

"And may I ask its name?"

"The desire of power. Yes, Fowler, I read female nature ill, if that girl would not rather link herself with the decrepitude that wielded the fate of empires, than wed the handsomest youth that ever wore satin doublet or silk hose,

if he had no further merits than his success in a pavon, or his happiness in the selection of a sword-knot—if he possessed not, in short, habits of thought or action fitted to win for him a world-wide fame and reputation."

"And on this you found your hopes?"

"Hopes, I have none. I would but say this, that if a man could win her, it is thus she might be won."

"But even if you did succeed in gaining the maiden's smiles, pardon me for reminding you that she is the King's Ward, and James might not consent."

"What! that learned idiot! The greatest gull in Christendom might mould him like a piece of potter's clay."

"But the Queen! She is made of sterner stuff, and you are no favourite of her Majesty's."

"Because I do not figure in the Coranto, or, like the Spanish Ambassador, keep a bale of scented Cordova gloves for her fair fingers."

"Yet the favour of sovereigns has been won by matters not more important."

"Pooh! I have not put forth my strength, lad. I know of a certain secret, even more potent than the scented gloves of Don Diego."

"Well then, your Excellency, if you can vanquish King and Queen, and lady bright, you have little need to regret—what I know you do regret—the arrest of the Devereux."

"How so!" said Bowes, in astonishment.

"You may not be Prime Minister of England under King Robert, but you may be Prime Minister of England under King James and Queen Anne."

"How prove you that?"

"Wed but this girl, and you rule our fortunes. Heaven only knows the mechanism of female likings and female brains. Whether it be the dancing or the dressing, the tapestry or the intellect, I know not, but I know this, that the power of Mistress Ker over the Queen is already absolute. She sees but with her eyes, she hears but with her ears, and if the all-

powerful favourite become your wife, I will guarantee that the Ambassador to King James will one day be his minister and his master."

The remark awoke no reply. It seemed, however, to have suggested ample room for reflection, for Bowes sank back in his chair, and for some minutes, abandoned himself to his own thoughts.

"It is a matter to be reflected on," said he, at length, "but now, haste ye to the Palace, and announce to the King, my recovery from my illness at Edinburgh, and my presence here."

"Shall I seek for you an interview?"

"Nothing of the sort. If his finances be so low as ye tell me, I shall, no doubt, be speedily commanded to his presence, and a sought for guest is ever a welcome one."

"Well, then," said Fowler, as he rose to obey his patron's orders, "I will bid your Excellency adieu, and if your appearance at the palace, be dependant upon the state of King Jamie's finances, you will be summoned

ere long; for I have squeezed the sponge dry, and to my knowledge, he is, at this moment, not the possessor of a farthing."

And the friends separated.

CHAPTER XIX.

JAMES VI.

We must change the scene to the Palace. At the north-west angle of the building, looking upon the lake and pleasure grounds, was a room of no great size. It was panelled with oak, on wall and ceiling, and had, at one time, been richly furnished, for the hangings were of maroon velvet, while the high backed chairs and oak cabinets, which decorated its recesses, were not, unfrequently, in the delicacy of their carving and outline, exquisite specimens of art. But neglect, not time, had done its work, and everything bespoke indifference in the

master of the mansion, or his domestics. The chairs were covered with dust, the caryatides on the cabinets wanted, occasionally, nose or chin, and the velvet, which draped the windows and the seats, was, here and there, deeply stained, as if wine and wassail had played their part rudely in its neighbourhood.

A similar indifference to the neatnesses of life, displayed itself in the other parts of the chamber. In one corner, swathed with bandages and asleep, lay two magnificent stag hounds, in the midst of some half-gnawed bones. In another, were three Norway goshawks on their perches, while the raw meat, which formed their lures, lay on a shelf near them; and all around, on floor or against wall, in most admired disorder, were hunting poles and otter spears, bugle-horns and *couteaux de chasse*, fish-nets and cross-bows. A large ill-tempered looking monkey sat upon a stool. On a sideboard, were a cup and some half-empty wine flasks; while in the centre of the room, as if to complete the extraordinary character of the

medley, stood a table, covered with a Turkey carpet, and bearing on its ample surface, numerous folio volumes of Classics and Divinity. In their midst, gleamed the star of the Order of St. Michael, the object of the proudest aspiration of northern chivalry, and which, like "the Garter" in England, and the "Toison d'Or" of the house of Burgundy, ever formed a portion of the personal decoration of the sovereign.

The occupants of the apartment, were two men. The younger, and evidently the superior in rank, was about five and thirty : the features good, the eye mild, the person not ill made. His dress had once been handsome, for the doublet and cloak, were of black velvet—the collar of Mechlin lace—the shirt of the finest Holland. But slovenliness and years had combined to destroy any beauty they might originally have possessed; and the linen was now filthily dirty, while the upper clothing was unbrushed, and where not patched, in rags. The person of their owner was in scarce better keeping. The face had a greasy unwholesome

look, and the hands were begrimed enough, to suggest a doubt whether they had ever made the acquaintance of water. But the wearer of the tattered habiliments seemed to trouble himself little about the neglect of his person and dress, for he kept moving about the room with a sort of rolling gait—now whistling the half bar of some old air—now playing with the monkey—now pouring out for himself a glass of wine—now handling a folio, or a hawk's jesses, and now bandying jokes with his companion, a little shrivelled faced old man of sixty, whose deep set clear grey eye, and wizened features, indicated alike his shrewdness, and his cynicism.

It was James VI, and David Moyse, a gentlemen of his bed-chamber.

The character of James is one of the most singular in history.

Much consequence has been attached to race, and the tenacity with which it has been supposed to implant its idiosyncracies in members of the same family, and yet if we except his passion for favourites, there was nothing

in the character of the King of Scots to connect him with the Stuarts. His forefathers, improvident often, and luckless ever, had been distinguished for their personal prowess, and their passion for military adventure. James hated alike the amusements of the tilt-yard, or the more perilous enterprizes of real warfare. His father Darnley, and his mother, the unfortunate Mary, were not only refined in manners, but had been to the last degree vain of their persons and fond of dresses calculated to display them to advantage. James, on the contrary, was almost filthy in his habits, and had such an aversion to a change of raiment, that even in the palmy days of his future kingdom, he could hardly be persuaded to resign his worn out apparel, even when its rents and patches made the wearing it inconsistent with decency. His grandfather, James V., was active in civil government, and economical if not penurious in expenditure. His grandmother, Mary of Guise, stands conspicuous among the female sovereigns of the age for her personal energy, and mental

powers. James had nothing of all this. He was educated without being intellectual; and education but reproduces the thoughts of others —intellectuality creates its own. Without any apparent object beyond the mere pleasure of expenditure, he was profligately extravagant; and was always speaking of the rights of the crown, without ever really exerting them. The habits of the age demanded in the high born, great personal dignity, but James in defiance alike of public opinion, and what the inherent pride of his family might have led us to expect, indulged in a familiarity of intercourse with his domestics, and a coarseness of intonation and phraseology, probably scarcely exceeded by the lowest of his subjects. This would appear incomprehensible, did we not see constant exemplifications of it in every day life. How often do we find in the same family, two individuals mixing in the same class, and possessing the same advantages of education and society, and yet exhibiting at each moment, the most marked differences of thought, and language;—the one, polished in bearing and

expression; elevated in associations, in ideas, in tastes—and the other gross and grovelling alike in his springs of action, his manners and his amusements. And so it was with the King of Scots. The graces of the early Stuarts reappeared in Charles I; but in his father, their courtliness, their gallantry, their pride, existed not.

Yet, with all this, James had much occasional shrewdness; and his remarks on men and things were often singularly felicitous. But, unhappily, like the Knight of La Mancha, he was ever ready to sacrifice the practical for the abstract: and thus, the knowledge which, in one wiser in his generation, would have won golden opinions from contemporaries and posterity; in him, as in the hero of Cervantes, led only to ridicule, and failure, and disgrace.

"Na, na, Davy," said the King, continuing the conversation on which we have intruded, "ye need say naething against the puir brute. But I ken what for ye misca' it sae. Ye're jealous, man."

"Jealous!" repeated his attendant, in accents of astonishment.

"Ou, ay! just jealous. Deil tak my saul gin the puggy be no your vara pictur—your *alter ego*, as ye might say."

And the King pointed to the monkey, which still sat on its stool, watching with intense gravity the proceedings of its companions, and, with its sharp eyes, and pinched features, bearing indisputably no faint resemblance to the gentleman usher.

The official did not, however, seem to be at all gratified by the comparison, for, instead of joining in the uproarious mirth with which the King had welcomed its discovery, he shrugged his shoulders, and walked indignantly away.

"Od man!" said James, who evidently enjoyed the mortification of his companion "Ye need na tak on sae. I was intending to be complimentary. The puggy is a pleasant companion. Did onybody ever sae the like of you? Na, na. Ye're weel kenned for a' dour auld Israelite—ane of the stiff-necked

generation; and I'm jealousin' that ye're no mair souple about the heels, than about the head. Now, Satan there can lowp like my best hunting naig."

As if to give immediate proof of the fact, the King began to torment his four-footed favourite with a stick, driving him round and round the room, from table to chair, from cabinet to chimney-piece, following the chase with the animation of a child of five years old, and hailing with laughter loud and long, any more than ordinary specimen of agility. The animal, however, seemed to take less delight in the sport, than his master; till, at length, irritated by his perseverance, he sprang upon the table in the centre of the room, and seizing the St. Michael that was lying on it, he scrambled up to the roof, and, seating himself upon one of the corbels, began leisurely to pull the jewel to pieces, flinging the diamonds, as he tore them from their sockets, upon the floor, and finishing his act of spoliation by passing the blue ribbon attached to

the star, round his neck, and gibbering at his master below, as if to inform him of the success of his revenge.

The act roused the gentleman usher from his lethargy.

"Gude guide us!" said he; "he has got the Saint Michael—he's rugging at it—he's making ducks and drakes o't."

"And he has put the blue ribbon ower his head," said the King, flinging himself into his chair in an ecstacy of delight, and clapping his hands uproariously, in approbation of the act of his favourite, while the tears ran down his cheeks, and his tongue, always too large for his mouth, projected itself, from the intensity of his enjoyment.

"Div ye deny, now," continued he, as soon as he had recovered his power of articulation. "Div ye deny now, the wit of the beast? Will ye tak it on ye, now, to aver that ye are ever half as funny as the puggy?"

"Funny d'ye ca' it?" said his attendant, in accents of indignant astonishment, "and that

brute reiving to bits your best jewel; and you laughing that gait! I wonder your Highness is no' ashamed o' yersel."

"Hout, man. *Dulce est desipere in loco.* Can you gie us the meaning o' that?"

His attendant said nothing.

"Aha, Davy! I hae kittled ye. Ye are ay bragging and blawing about your knowledge of the Humanities; but I doubt if ye ken what that means?"

"Ou, ay."

"Weel, what is't?"

"It means," said Davy, looking at the King, so as to leave no doubt of the gist of his words, "that some folk are never content, but when they are making fules o' themselves."

"Eh! wow! what's that?" said James, as his attendant's meaning broke slowly on him, "Ye scoundrel—ye vagabond—ye misleared auld deevil, ye—how daur ye speak to the Lord's Anointed after siccan a fashion? But I hae borne ower lang wi your insolence. I renounce ye. I discharge ye. I hae done it a score o' times a'ready; but now, I am in

downright earnest. So, be aff wi ye. *Abi—evade—effuge—erupe.* Weel," continued he, as he saw no symptoms of his attendant's obeying his orders, "what are ye stopping for?"

"I'm no ganging."

"What for?"

"My conscience wunna let me."

"Your conscience?"

"Ou, ay—just my conscience. Your mither (worthy woman! may grace be wi' her!) pat ye in my arms when ye were na aucht months auld. 'Davy,' said she, 'tak tent to the bairn, and that he may grow up in grace and godliness, counsel him frae time to time, according to the best of your abeelity.' So, ye see, I hae a compact to implement, and am no free to leave ye."

"Weel, weel, Davy," said the King, whose good humour had returned with what he considered the opportunity of delivering a mortal thrust. "As far as the *abeelity*'s concerned, the less said about that the better; and as for the counselling, your conscience

need na prick ye anent that; for the deil a thing else have ye done, but deave me wi't, ever since I was ta'en out of cotes. But, eh! wow, Davy, man," said James, drawing himself up to his full height, and assuming an attitude that was intended to be at once dignified and admonitory. "Ye maun hae a gude conceit o' yersel. A puir fusionless body like you, to tak on ye to redd me, wha, so to say, hae been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Ye ken that, Davy—ye ken that."

"I ken that ye were weel whuppit by Geordie Buchanan, gif that's what ye mean."

"Out on yer ill-faured tongue, ye misleared villain, ye. What gars ye fling the tawse in my face that gate. My certie! gin ye had had them ower your loof as aften as I hae, ye wad na crack about them sae crousely. But ye're a donnard auld deevil, Davy. I could never teach ye the elegancies of life. Ye hae na the courtly manners of Tam Fowler."

"A fause Southron that sells ye to the Cecils."

"Ye're jealous, Davy—jealous of him, as ye were of the puggy—and speaking of the puggy, puts me in mind that I'm drouthy wi' rinning after the brute. Sae gie us the Canary."

His attendant hastened to obey his order, and raised the salver, upon which stood the flagon of wine and the wine-glass. In doing so, he left to view a portion of the side table, and upon this lay a letter.

"Gude be wi' us," said James. "What's this?" and with the eager curiosity which formed so marked a part of his character, he seized the missive.

"A letter," said he, "and to our ain-sel'," and he read aloud with great emphasis, the superscription:

"'For the private hands of his Highness, the King of Scots. Haste, haste, post haste.'

"Eh! *Private hands?* Div ye mark the words, Davy. A secret, nae doubt. What is't? What can it be?" And with fingers

trembling with eagerness, the King cut the silken threads that bound together the missive, tore it open, and read aloud as follows:

"'A high and mighty Prince, a well-wisher of the King of Scots, has learned of plots that affect his life and future succession. As it is over perilous to entrust the mention of them to a letter, a special envoy will be sent to warn King James of his danger, and enable him to guard against it. The envoy will make himself known to the King by holding up the thumb and fore-finger of his right hand, and uttering the word *Eureka*. As the success of the mission depends upon its secrecy, it is not permitted to mention this letter or its contents to any one, as it is alleged that the King of Scots does not maintain that silence in his councils which prudence and success require.'"

For a minute after the perusal of the communication, the King stood silent, turning from time to time toward his companion with a puzzled look, as if he were unable to comprehend the meaning of his correspondent, or

entertained suspicions of the orthodox character of the communication. The latter feeling became gradually the predominant one, for he hastily threw the letter on the ground, as if anxious to get quit of a dangerous connexion, and exclaimed :

" Davy, I'm doubtin' it's no canny."

" Gae awa wi ye," said his less superstitious attendant. " But here's mair on't. What's this on the seal? *Tace et Vale.* That'll be the Latin for " read and reive."

" *Tace et Vale,*" repeated the King. " Whew !" continued he, with a long whistle, which rung through the apartment. " I'm on the scent now. I mind gettin just siccan a letter, wi' siccan a seal, and siccan a superscription, warning me o' Bothwell, when he made the Raid of Falkland, alang wi' that devil's bairn, Kinmont Willie. It's as plain as a pike-staff."

" It's no a mak-believe, then ?"

" Na, na. It's a doom's truth."

" Weel, if there's nae daffin in't, its an honest letter."

"I'll no say na. But the carle that wrote it is no ower blate, for a' that. Did ye note his saying, that I couldna keep a secret? Now, that's just awfu'! For nane kens better than yoursel, Davy, that the de'il a thing I ever say to ony body, excep' it be to Jock o' the Sclates, or Tam o' the Cowgate, or Fowler, or yersel', or it may be some twa or three mair—a' trusty and confidential persons. But it's grand fun, ony gait, to hae an ambassador comin', and no ane of thae billies, that think themselves sae far ben, kennin' ony thing about him."

"It wad be grander fun still, if we kenned ony thing about him oursel. Whar's he frae?"

"Dear kens! But his maister's a high and michty prince;—ye saw that; sae I doubt na he'll be comin' like the Earl of Sussex, wi twal trumpeters."

"There were scrimp sax."

"Aught pursuivants," continued the impressionable and imaginative King, without paying any attention to the corrections of his more literal domestic.

"He had just four."

"Twa pages."

"There was nane but ane, and he was bow-legged."

"Weel, weel, Davy. There's no that muckle difference atween you and me. We're a' agreed about the ambassador; and he'll be ridiculous grand;—ye may tak yer davy o' that; and I doubt na he'll be bringing me a propine—sax horses, maybe, like the Barbary courses I gat frae the King of Spain, or a muckle gilt vase, like what the States o' Holland sent me at the christening of the Duke of Rothsay."

"I dinna ken what he'll bring ye, but I'm jalousin' he'll cost ye a hantle siller."

"How's that?"

"Ye'll hae to make him a banquet."

"Na, na. I'll gar the town of Edinburgh do that. Thae Baillie bodies are ay ready to birle their bawbees, when they hae a chance o' sittin' shouther to shouther with kings and ambassadors, and siclike grit folk."

"But they'll be a' in their braws, and it'll no do for you to be ganging in thae auld duds.

There's but ae clash in town and kintra, and that is, that ye are no sae weel put on as ye micht be."

"Na, na, Davy," said the King, in a self-satisfied tone, "naebody can accuse me o' bein' taen' up with the vanities of dress. *Simplex munditiis*, Davy, *simplex munditiis*."

"I dinna ken what ye ca' *simplex munditiis*, but I ken this, that ye hae na shifted yer sark these aucht days, and but washen yer hands ance since Martinmas."

"Possibly, my freend, possibly," said James, with a patronising flourish of the anathematised fingers, "but it's no upon record that Solon, or Socrates, or the elder Cato, or the wise men o' the East, fashed their thumbs about clean sarks, or washen hands, or siclike Whig-maleeries."

"But the ambassador's coming to see a King, and no the wise men o' th' East, or the Wast either; and, as a King, ye should dress yersel."

"Weel, Davy, though I haud ye to be a puir weak cretur, and a'thegither unfit to counsel

ane like mysel, yet in this I will humour ye; and the mair sae, that as Solomon, when he received the Queen of Sheba, appeared in all his glory, it may no be out o' place that we oursel', whom our subjects—it may be, wi an ower-flattering perception of our gude qualities—persist in ca'ing the Solomon of the present age, should, for ance, indue the *Persicos apparatus*, as the classicists wad say, and shine forth in our divine majesty."

"But the dress?"

"The dress! Gude kens we hae dresses eneugh."

"Whar?"

"Here, to be sure. Didna I send Jock Colville to Lunnun, at the time o' my marriage, and didna he bring me doun half a score o' suits, sae guarded wi lace, sae bedizened wi velvets and satin, sae set off wi' points, ribands, rosettes, and feathers, that it took the yearly mails o' a dozen baronies to pay the charges o' the tailor in Eastcheap. Ye mind, Davy?"

"Ou ay. I mind weel eneugh."

"Weel—whar is't?"

"Whar's what?"

"The memorial man."

"What'na memorial?"

"The tailor's man—the list o' the claes that Jock Colville brought frae Lunnun. Gude be wi' us!" said the King, as he noticed the despair on the countenance of his attendant. "I trust ye hae na lost it it."

"Na, na, the memorial's safe eneugh."

"Bring it then, man, and I will let ye ken preceesely the dress whilk I will indue on the present occasion."

The aged gentleman of the bed-chamber hastened to obey his master's orders, and shortly returned, bearing in his hands a piece of parchment about a yard long, ornamented on the edges with gilding, and attached at one end to an equally ornate pocket-book, which formed, when folded, the cover of the precious document.

"Let's see, man," said James, flinging himself into his chair, and snatching the parchment from his attendant. "Memorial of habiliments for the person of his Majesty the King of Scots,

made by Will Snipwell of Eastcheap, London, and delivered into the hands of Mr. John Colville.

"No. 1. 'A Doblett of yellow Bawdkyn, covered wtth yelowe Saten with hose to the same.' Eh, man, that's grand! I'll wear that."

"Na, ye wunna. Ye gied that as a propine to the Earl of Sussex, the Embassador Extraordinar, that the Queen of England sent to congratulate ye on the marriage."

"Humph. Weel, let's see. No. 2. 'A Doblett hose and Jacquet of Purple Velvete embroidered and cut upon Cloth of Gold and lined with white Satin.' That's no that ill. I'll wear that."

"Ye'll hae to gang to Denmark for't then; for the Queen axed it for Peter Munch, her father's High Admiral."

"Did she? My leddy wife might hae bethought her o' the proverb about gie'in ane's ain fish-guts to ane's ain sea-maws.' Weel, what's next? No. 3. 'A Doblet and Jacquet of

white Tilsent cut upon Cloth of Gold embroidered with hose to the same and clasps and aglettes of Gold.' Eh, man, that's the grandest o' a'. That maun needs dazzle the een o' the Ambassador."

"Ay, but that's gane too. Ye lost it to the Earl o' Arran, when his horse 'Rob the Ranter' beat yer mare 'Jingling Jenny' on Leith Sands."

"May the deil flee awa wi' 'Rob the Ranter' and 'Jingling Jenny,' and the Earl o' Arran—a' three o' them. Let's see what's next. No. 4. 'A hose and doblet of Black Tilsent like Bird's eyes.'"

"That's no to the fore, neither," broke in his attendant. "Ye gied that to the Laird o' Logie for a cast of Norway goshawks. But it's nae use reading ony mair. Fient a suit hae ye got aff yer back, but the ane out at the elbucks, whilk I took to be mended."

"Weel, Davy, it's may be kentspeckle. eneugh—Whan wull't be hame?"

"Gude kens, for the tailor says he'll be d—d if he'll put in a steek till his account's paid,

and he has na had plack or bawbee sin Candlemas."

"Heard ye ever the like of that?" said the astounded monarch. "A tailor loon refusing to cloot his lawful prince's coat, except for present fee and reward. Eh, Davy, how subjects are deteriorated frae their former loyalty! But the warld's ay ganging frae waur to warse. It was just the same fifteen hunder year bygane. What says Quintus Horatius Flaccus—"

But the quotation was never destined to be even commenced. The vessel of Davy's wrath had long been at boiling heat, and its waters now burst forth beyond all control.

"The deil tak Quintus Horatius Flaccus! The Lord forgie us for saying sae, but it would drive a Job dementit to hear yer Highness haiverin about a wheen haythens, and you wi a grand ambassador comin,' and no a hail sark to yer back, or a stockin to yer fit."

The despair of his attendant, seemed to affect the King, for it was in a tone almost apologetic, that he resumed.

"Weel, weel, Davy, it's nae use girnin'

about it. '*Æquam memento*,' man. Follow my example; cultivate divine philosophy."

"I'll do that when I've seen Divine Philosophy gie yer highness a new suit o' claes; for they're sair needed; and whar they're to come frae, clean beats me."

"Hout! man, I'll borrow. Whilk o' my nobles is maist *point device* in his apparel?"

"Beyond compare, the Warden of the Marches."

"Whilk? for there are twa."

"The wast."

"Buccleugh?"

"Just him."

"I'll send for his claes."

"Ye could na get into them. He's ower jimp in the waist. Na, na, ye maun just gang back to the Earl o' Mar. He has stood ye in stead, afore now; and mind ye ask him especially for the grand silk stockings, that he gat frae Flanders' sax weeks by-gane. A' Scotland's clashing about them."

"Ay, I must e'en try Jock o' the Sclates.

He is a gude subject, and wad na that his prince should look like a scrub, on siccan occasion. But wha comes here?" continued he, as a rap was heard at the door. On permission being given, Fowler entered, and according to his instructions, announced to his master, the arrival of the English Ambassador, from Edinburgh.

The King's face brightened.

"Awa Tam, awa with the speed o' light, and tell him that I desire his presence here instantly, on important business. Davy," continued he, as soon as the door had closed, and he had been once more left alone with his aged attendant, "I'll get gear now. Thae pock-puddings are never without some in their pouch—and hae him up lad, to the chamber o' audience, they ca' Queen Mary's room; for the last time he was here, he said he could na thole the smell o' the hawks and the hounds. Set him up! quotha; but when ane's wantin' siller o' a' fule, it's better to fleech than to fecht wi' him."

Davy proceeded to execute his mission, and the King once more threw himself into his chair, to await, with what patience he might, the appearance of his longed-for visitor.

END OF VOL. I.

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